



02913  
THE DEADLY  
HANDS OF  
KUNG FU

JAN. No 8

75¢



NO MAN CAN STAND AGAINST...

# THE DEADLY HANDS OF

# KUNG FU™

**SPECIAL!**  
**EVERYTHING**

YOU WANTED TO KNOW  
ABOUT THOSE

**SWORDS OF DEATH**

MOVIES

BUT DIDN'T DARE ASK



ALSO...

**SHANG CHI AND SONS OF THE TIGER**

SON OF FU MANCHU

THE STORM OF VENGEANCE

**MARVEL**



## Under The Pagoda

BY JOHN DAVID WARNER

# Fantasy. Folklore And Things That Go Slash In The Night

### FASTER THAN A SPEEDING MACHINE GUN???

The "sword films" differ in many ways from the "fist film". My personal taste tends to prefer the "sword films," but there are plenty of Kung Fu freaks who tend to disagree with me. However, the one area where the fist and sword films come together is in the action. There are lengthy battles for all with some skilled swordsmen killing opponents "faster than a machine gun" (a paraphrased quote from Run Run Shaw, the producer of almost all the Hong Kong martial arts films).

The major difference between sword and fist films arise out of period and approach. Almost all the sword films take place in Medieval China and, because the period lends itself so well, the films tend to abound in fantasy and folklore. The final metamorphosis of this becomes the "sword and mysticism" films, but I'll get to them later. In the "sword films," we have fearless martial artists finding high adventure and peril in an amazingly Conanesque world.

"*DEADLY DUO*" is an excellent example. It deals with the Suan province rebels rising up against the Mongols who hold the beloved Prince Kang captive. The only way to get to the Prince is over a bridge that "will not support human weight"! But the rebels are joined by a very skilled fighter who gets them across the bridge, as well as defeating five special warriors who represent the five elements—gold, wood, water, fire and earth. Fire, wood and earth were especially good. Fire had a staff which fired explosive pellets. Earth, or Moleman as he is called, hides in underground burrows and springs out at his enemies. And wood, or Treeman, walks in and out of doors in tree trunks (no kidding—trees with doors).

In case you haven't guessed, being a sword film does not limit it to swords. They tend to use every

weapon imaginable, and then some. One man in "*DEADLY DUO*" actually hacks people up with a pair of cymbals.

Another film I recommend is "*THE BLOOD BROTHERS*". Here is a tale of betrayal and political intrigue. We watch three friends as they go from bandits to revolutionary generals and then imperial warriors, fighting for the other side. One "brother" becomes power hungry and betrays the other two, having one killed. The rest is a story of vengeance.

### THE IRON PALM IS QUICKER THAN THE EYE!

The mysticism/sword-and-mysticism films are a bit strange and, for the most part, you'll have to judge for yourself if you like them. I, personally, do! Don't expect anything to be too logical. They don't bother with too many explanations and there is no definition nor predictability to the magic. If someone is killed, there's a good chance that person actually split himself/herself into two people and will reappear. Grand masters pop in and out of the action constantly and the special effects man has a field day.

Two I'll recommend—"GHOST LAMP" and "*BO KUNG'S JURISDICTION IN HADES*". "*GHOST LAMP*" is great fun, perhaps silly and unintentionally humorous at times, but quite entertaining. In terms of plotting, though, it's about the loosest I've seen. They could show the reels out of order and you'd never know. "*BO KUNG . . .*" is the opposite—its plotting is meticulous, painstakingly figured. A good many people may not like this one as it has so little fighting that it makes the Kung Fu television show look violent. "*BO KUNG . . .*" deals with a magician/official having to solve a murder. He finds the case too unclear, so he goes to Hades to find the truth in Hades "records file".

—SAN FRANCISCO, CALIF.





# STAN LEE presents THE DEADLY HANDS OF KUNG FU

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Editor Emeritus

## MASTER OF KUNG FU: A HATRED FOR ALL SEASONS!

by Doug Moench, Mike Vosburg &  
Jack Abel

Shang-Chi sets himself up as a target for  
death to a modern-day Jack the Ripper!  
Page 7

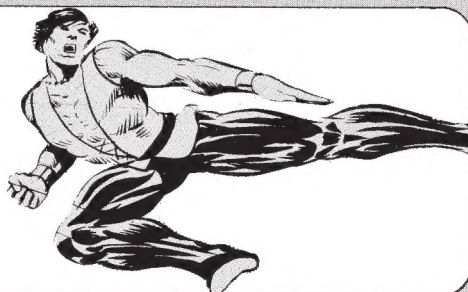


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## SONS OF THE TIGER: A STORM OF VENGEANCE!

by Bill Mantlo, George Perez & Al Milgrom

A madman, a giant Sumo wrestler, the  
Silent Ones—and a girl who brings the  
whole thing down on the Tiger Sons!  
Page 46







## IS THAT A METAPHYSICAL QUESTION OR WERE YOU JUST ASKING DIRECTIONS?

A better question might be: Can honesty survive in comics?  
Here's where we find out.

I've always had some difficulty writing in the first person, when that first person happens to be myself. Referring to oneself in the third person is just as strange, but that's another topic in itself.

How did I get here? It's a grey October day in Manhattan, and I've just listened to Bill Mantlo tell me that the *Sons of the Tiger* strip has been lost in the mail (a hairy scene if you happen to be the Editor, and the question arises again, how in the hell did I get to be the person they call Editor?!); and Marcia Gloster is telling me that we need an editorial to fill the empty space on the letters page (again, I ask, how did I become the person who is supposed to write the Editorial?) and further, she's informing me that I'm out of my mind if I really think we can get away with the kind of title page design I want.

No hype this trip, friends, and hopefully no ego trip, either.

I've no real answer for the lead question. I've always considered myself a writer, even when I was working in a factory, or as a security guard, or in any of the other myriad professions I held during those years when I was young and gay and light at heart. A writer. Nothing more.

Somewhere along the line I became sidetracked, and that road kept branching off, though my love for writing never diminished—that compulsion for bleeding onto the paper, wrenching it out, saying, "Here it is, people, this is part of me," and hoping I won't be trampled in the wake.

So here I am, trapped in the little box, hoping to find a way out. The question above asks about directions. I hope you've noticed that we've tightened up on our strips. Bill Mantlo, thank heavens, has just informed me that the artwork did arrive at last and we will have a *Sons of the Tiger* episode this issue. We're trying to focus on the separate identities of our three protagonists, placing them in contemporary situations and concentrating on visual dynamics; this issue's "Slaughter in Central Park" is the first step in that direction.

Directions.

I'd like to see more articles in this magazine that aren't just mindless ad-hype for movies playing in your neighborhood theater—these will be articles with opinions that reflect individual author's tastes. You may agree. You may disagree. But you'll know they were honest...and that's where we're at. We'll experiment with layouts (as we did in last issue's RETURN OF THE DRAGON article). Sometimes we'll fail, gang—that's honesty, but hopefully, the risk will be worth the gamble and will offer you a stimulating magazine in concept and design for your 75¢.

Man, do I wish that *had* been a metaphysical question you asked back there, rather than this.

We'll try to keep a personal touch with you—that's right, you—the reader. Your ideas are important. They're important to me, they're important to Dave Kraft, they're important to the future of this book, and we'll fight the Dreaded Deadline Doom, meet him head on every four weeks, just to meet you here once a month.

Hang in there, people!

—Don McGregor  
Editor

Dear "Deadly Hands,"

It was the beginning of June and I saw a new book on the newsstand, called THE DEADLY HANDS OF KUNG FU.

While glancing through the mag, I noticed it was produced by the Marvel Comics people. Boy, did the name Marvel Comics bring back memories! Why, when I was a kid I remember spending countless hours reading SPIDER-MAN, THOR, HULK and all the other "super-heroes." even remember a TV show called "The Merry Marvel Marching Society." I thought of how bugged my mother would get when, instead of reading a book, I'd be reading Marvel Comics all the time.

After glancing thoroughly through DEADLY HANDS, I was enchanted by the articles, the art—and just the whole thing.

But I said to myself, "I can't buy this, I'm nineteen now, I shouldn't be reading comics anymore, times changed from when I had a lot of leisure time, I have to think ahead to the future and forget about comic books." So I did the only thing you can do in a situation like that—think of an excuse!

"I know," I said to myself, "I'll buy a copy for my little cousin!"

Well, I've bought a copy each month since, and my little cousin hasn't seen one yet; I've read each issue cover to cover.

Some kids never grow up, I guess.

Keep up the good work.

Rocco Nardone  
72 N. Munn Avenue  
Newark, NJ 07106

We've always known that some kids never grow up, Rocco, but we always thought all those who didn't were working for *us*! It's nice to see that some of them are still *reading* these magazines!

Actually, while we've said this before (and no doubt we'll say it again), there is never a time when you're "too old" to read comics; in fact, with each successive year, comics are becoming more and more accepted and acknowledged as a unique entertainment and communication media. Why, no less a personage than Federico Fellini (he of the widely-acclaimed and respected motion picture fame for SATYRICON and others) has seen fit to recognize and applaud comics in general and Marvel in particular. And he is only one among many.

So, in our long-winded way we have—we think—made our point. And we're glad you're a DEADLY HANDS reader, Rocco; welcome back aboard the mighty Marvel ark.



## READERS' FORUM

Uh-oh! It's that time again, when we put forward one of the letters we've received that we want to hear more about—so take it away, Charlie!

Dear Marvel,

I agree with William Mills that Mantis of the Avengers should have her own series, where you can explore her more fully. Why don't you have the Mantis versus a group of female martial arts assassins? So far, Marvel's magazines have shown nothing but male assassins; I'm surprised that Women's Lib hasn't jumped you because of one-sided issues. When will you bring Fu Manchu's daughter, Fah Loh Suee, into one of Shang Chi's stories? What are the chances of an adaptation of Sax Rohmer's THE DAUGHTER OF FU MANCHU into comics form? How about a story on how Shang-Chi's mother met Fu Manchu for the first time?

Charles David Haskell  
15 West 139th Street  
New York, NY 10037

Yours is but one of the many letters which we've received giving us suggestions about female martial arts characters. The only trouble is, all the suggestions have not been as complimentary as yours—many of our readers have sworn that they will never buy a single Marvel magazine again if we devote so much as one comic page to the adventures of Mantis! What's a poor muddled comics company to do?

(For those of you unfamiliar with the ways of our womanly Kung Fu star, we suggest that you pick up a copy of our full color comic, THE AVENGERS, in which Mantis co-stars each issue.)

As for Fu Manchu's daughter and Shang-Chi's mother—we must be close-lipped at the moment, but things *are* in store...!



Dear Kung Fu-ers;

This letter is plainly and simply one of praise, not only for a fantastic character (which Shang-Chi is), but for master artist Paul Gulacy.

His first work on Morbius stunk, to be kind about it; it was the last piece of his work I've seen that I consider less than excellent. Many have called him a pseudo-Steranko. Well, I—as much as anybody—would like nothing better than to see Jim come back to comics, but since the odds are almost astronomical, Paul Gulacy is far and away my second best choice.

His layouts and visuals are, agreed, almost totally influenced by Jim Steranko, but—hot damn—how that boy can draw!

I haven't written a letter to any columns for some time. Feels good. I'll have to do it more often...

Steve Clement  
15 Campbell Terrace  
Pawtucket, RI 02860

And we hope to be hearing from you more often, Steve. It's a good feeling for *us* to know that something we've done has made you decide to pick up that ol' pen and place it to paper. Now, if you'll pardon us, we hear the tinkling of bells, which is a subtle way of cueing us that our time has run out, and that we should be cutting our eloquent comments honorably short in order to make room for that most-looked-for feature—



Dear Roy and Marv—

In issue #2's reprint of "The Origin of Shang-Chi," Sir Denis Nayland Smith was in a wheelchair because Tak (Fu Manchu's guard) crippled him. But, in your Special Album Edition (part 3 of "The Master Plan of Fu Manchu") he was walking around and climbing up a ladder. Maybe I missed something, but what's going on?

York MacEvan  
895 Montford Road  
Cleveland Hts, OH 44121

As all followers of our color comic, MASTER OF KUNG FU, already know, Sir Denis Nayland Smith was badgered by Shang-Chi into realizing that his condition was only a creation of his own mind. His leg had actually healed, and his affliction had become psychosomatic. He's back on his feet these days and more active than ever in his pursuit of the devil doctor—Fu Manchu.

Okay, York?

Dear Mr. Isabella—

Yes, Yes, Yes, No!

There you have my answers.

Jim Allcorn  
5177 Lower Mountain Road  
Lockport, NY 14094

Hmm...

We'll assume that you're answering the questions put forward by Tony the Tiger not too long ago... unfortunately, the issue's not at hand, so we don't know what the questions were (did we *ever* claim to be organized?). But we'll be happy to supply you with four new ones...

(1): Who's more didactic—Plato or President Ford?

(2): Why is the square of one leg of a right triangle added to the square of the other leg equal to the square of the hypotenuse?

(3): Aren't you glad you use Dial? Don't you wish everyone did?

And last but not least...

(4): Is it true blondes have more fun?

We trust that this will help bring you inner peace.

## READERS' POLL

Once more, without aid of nunchaku or benefit of *bo*, we reveal how you felt about the articles and stories in DEADLY HANDS OF KUNG FU #5:

- (1): Doug Moench, Keith Pollard, and Bob McLeod are celebrating the fact that Shang-Chi's tale, "Two Roads To Seek, One Path To Glory," stole the applause, leaving...
- (2): "The Casket of Hsien Hang," by Mary Skrenes, Paul Gulacy, and Duffy Vohland not far behind.
- (3): Frank McLaughlin's article, "Kung Fu or Karate—Which Is Better?" finishes off the first half of our poll.
- (4): Stan Lee, Jack Kirby, and Frank Giacoia introduced Batroc the Leaper to the readers of our black-and-white magazines, in "The Blitzkrieg of Batroc," and—
- (5): David Anthony Kraft's inspection of the paperback series K'ing Kung Fu was followed by...
- (6): "And Men Shall Call Him Samurai," Chris Claremont's perceptive look at the film, *Lightning Swords of Death*.

Well, Grasshopper, what do you think? What's that—you felt the best feature in that issue was the Charles Atlas ad? So how cum ya didn't vote? The address is—

THE DEADLY HANDS OF KUNG FU  
Marvel Magazine Group  
575 Madison Avenue  
New York, NY 10022





The sad-but-true tale of an editor who struggled to write an editorial, or—

# The Marvel Bullpen Page Goes Black and White and Read All Over

Don and Dave asked me to say hello! That's *Don McGregor* and *Dave Kraft*—and for those of you who have spent the past months living aboard Skylab Two, they *were* the assistant editors of Mighty Marvel's color comics. They now *are* (note the subtle change of tense) full-fledged Editors-in-standing of the ever-burgeoning multitude of Marvel Magazines, and they'll be working hand-in-hand, and bleary-eyes-in-bleary-eyes with me to continue to make the many 75¢ and \$1.00 monster-sized mags the absolute greatest mind-blowing masterpieces to be found anywhere.

It almost boggles the mind when you think of it, but Marvel only entered the then-stagnating magazine field a scant two years ago with all of *four* full-sized, fear-filled monster mags, and today we are publishing almost *fifteen* (oh, them good ole days). Back in those prehistoric years the mags were half-comics, and half-articles and reprints—now we can safely say they are all new; fact is, the only time we use reprint material is when either that ole debil deadlines, or the far-famed Post Office Service, give us a nasty kick in the rear. As for the articles, they've mostly been replaced either with comic art pages or short prose stories about our characters... and an entirely new magazine was formed for those who dug the monster articles (MONSTERS OF THE

MOVIES, just in case ya forgot).

Truth to tell, friends, we made quite a few mistakes as we struggled through our infancy, and now that we've evolved all the way to upper adolescence, we still manage to make our share of full-fledged boners. But we are in there pushing, shoving and—above all—trying.

Take *IRON FIST* as an example. We've advertised the mag for months now—we've even printed the cover painting in our ads. Well, don't spend your weekends searching for it, 'cause the mag's not coming out—at least not in the next few weeks. After assembling the finished story and art, we took a long hard look at what *would've* been our first issue and, frankly, we didn't like it. There was something missing, some special *zing* that has always been in the Marvel line of comics, and rather than sell you something we didn't like ourselves (which would've meant that you might well have *hated* it), we scrapped the mag and we're starting all over again. When we're satisfied that *IRON FIST* will be something a mite more than special, you'll be seeing it.

As for our already existing magazines, Don, Dave and I will be working day and night—and probably a few hours in between—to give you the best we can. This is just the beginning, friends—only *just the beginning!*

—Marv Wolfman

**ITEM!** Because the Wondrous Wolfman's remarks took up almost all the room for this page, we only have space for a few incredibly important announcements. So don't blink, friends—or you're liable to miss 'em!

**ITEM!** A scant few months ago, in our cavortin' color comics, we spilled the beans about our far-flung softball team. Well, it's end-of-the-season time as we scribble this, and we kinda figgered you might wanna know how the batty Bullpen fared as junior league Hank Aarons. Sad to say, our first few games proved we were not quite ready for a plaque at Cooperstown, but by season's end, there was no stopping us. Though we fumbled our try with the *VILLAGE VOICE*, and we stumbled over our union suits with that advertising giant BBD&O, we rallied and knocked the sails out of Islandic Airlines, and pushed Warren Publishing into its well-deserved last place with a tremendous 16-to-6 runaway. Practically everyone up at the office joined in on the fun, with the possible exception of our peerless production boss, *JOHN VERPOORTEN*. Seems Jumbo John couldn't bring himself to see his entire staff playing the bases, instead of laboring over their typewriters or drawing boards. Maybe *NEXT* year, John (or if we ever get the courage to invite the Playboy Bunnies to a game of touch football!). So it's now checklist time! See ya next month!

**ITEM!** We only have room to tell you there's no more room to tell you anything.

**DRACULA LIVES #10.** Dracula invades London for the first time—in our now-hailed classic adaptation of Bram



Stoker's original novel—plus Lilith, Daughter of Dracula, in a fear-fraught tale of terrible terror. On sale November 5.

**TALES OF THE ZOMBIE #9.** Simon Garth is granted life for 24 hours. Need we say more? An extra-long Zombie thriller. On sale November 12.

**HAUNT OF HORROR #5.** Satana battles the endless minions of her father, the overlord of Hell—and Gabriel faces the most horrifying menace any man has ever battled. On sale November 19.

**PLANET OF THE APES #4.** A riverboat named Simian

leads Jason and Alexander through the Forbidden Zone; also, chapter four of our *PLANET OF THE APES* adaptation. On sale November 22.

**SAVAGE TALES #8.** Enter—Shanna the She-Devil, as our jungle lass teams up with Ka-Zar to battle in the Savage Land. On sale November 26.

**DEADLY HANDS OF KUNG FU #8.** Shang-Chi versus his father's endless minions, while The Sons Of The Tiger face the terrible wrath of the Silent Ones. On sale December 3.



"THE SUN SHINES  
THROUGH **CRISP** AIR  
THIS MORNING, AND  
THIS STREET IN THE CITY  
OF SAN FRANCISCO  
SEEMS TO **SPARKLE**  
WITH THE LIGHT. I  
BREATHE **DEEPLY**, AND  
MY BODY **STRAIGHTENS**  
WITH THE EXHILARATION  
OF CLEAR **MORNING**."

# SHANG-CHI MASTER OF KUNG FU

"IF ONLY ALL STREETS  
WOULD SPARKLE, AND  
ALL AIR WERE **CLEAN**,  
THEN MIGHT ALL  
MORNINGS SHINE WITH  
CRISP **LIGHT** AND TASTE  
OF DEEP **BREATH**..."



"THEN MIGHT ALL  
MEN WALK IN  
EXHILARATION."

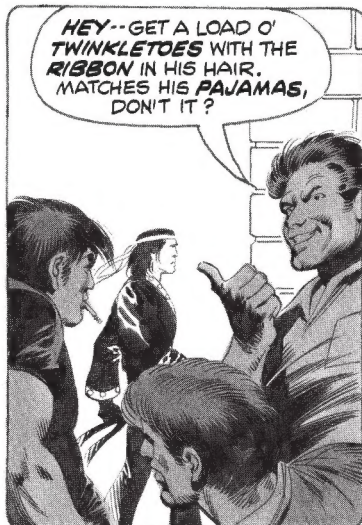
## A HATRED FOR ALL SEASONS

Story: DOUG MOENCH Art: MIKE VOSBURG and JACK ABEL

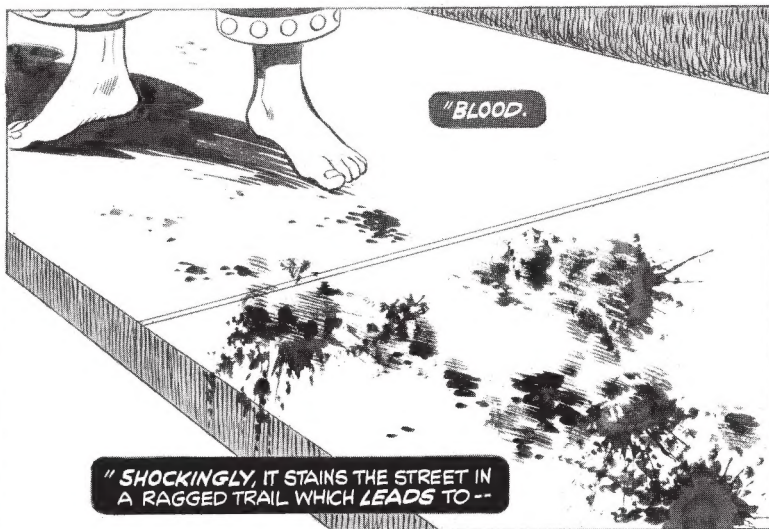
















"--A CROWD.

"I CANNOT SEE THE OBJECT OF THEIR HORROR.

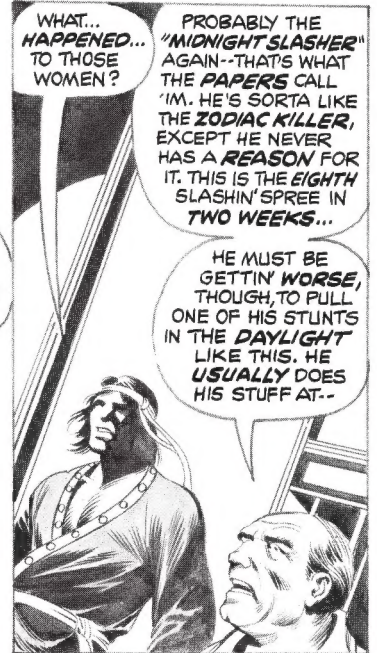


"...UNLESS I RISE ABOVE THEM.



"IT IS THE SOURCE OF THE BLOOD... A TRAIL WHICH BEGINS IN POOLS OF DEATH.

JUST LOOK AT THAT--- DISGUSTING.



WHAT... HAPPENED... TO THOSE WOMEN?

PROBABLY THE "MIDNIGHT SLASHER" AGAIN--THAT'S WHAT THE PAPERS CALL 'IM. HE'S SORTA LIKE THE ZODIAC KILLER, EXCEPT HE NEVER HAS A REASON FOR IT. THIS IS THE EIGHTH SLASHIN' SPREE IN TWO WEEKS...

HE MUST BE GETTIN' WORSE, THOUGH, TO PULL ONE OF HIS STUNTS IN THE DAYLIGHT LIKE THIS. HE USUALLY DOES HIS STUFF AT--



"NIGHT.

"I WALK STREETS WHICH NO LONGER SPARKLE, HOPING TO OFFER MY LIFE--



"--AS FALSE TEMPTATION...

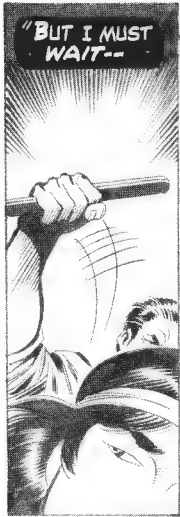


"...FOR DEATH.

SKE

"A SOUND...





"BUT I MUST WAIT--"



OOOFFF!!

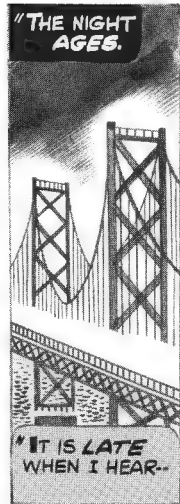
--UNTIL HE MOVES WITHIN REACH.

"BUT ALTHOUGH MY RUSE HAS SUCCEEDED..."



"...THE BAIT HAS BEEN SWALLOWED BY THE WRONG MAN..."

"...A MAN WHO WOULD CLUB AND STEAL, RATHER THAN SLASH...AND SLAY."



"THE NIGHT AGES."

"IT IS LATE WHEN I HEAR--"



EEEEEE!!

"...A SCREAM--!"



NO--!

PLEASE--!

LEAVE ME ALONE-- LET ME GO--!!

"AGAIN THERE IS NO KNIFE. BUT I MUST NOT LET THE WOMAN BE--"



KROK!



WORKED LIKE A CHARM, GINO. THIRD SLUCKER TONIGHT.

OKAY--SNATCH HIS BREAD AND LET'S SPLIT.



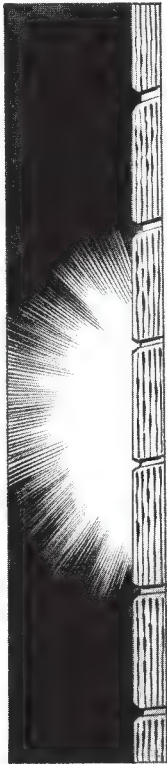
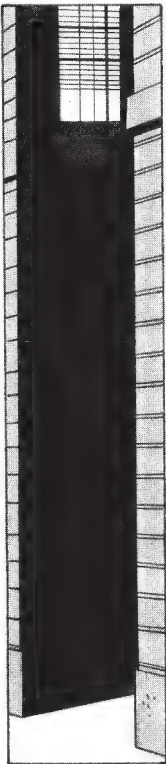
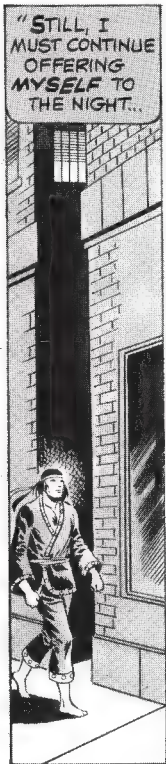
WITH PLEASURE, KATIE...

WITH--



--PL-AGHK-K!









... SORRY YOU  
EVER LIVED.

"FOOTSTEPS..."

"...SOFT..."



"...GATHERING SPEED IN  
FALSE SILENCE."



"IS IT HIM--?"

"HOW LONG WILL HE  
STALK ME...?"

"WHEN? WHEN WILL--"



"THE AIR--!"

"MIDNIGHT AIR  
SLASHED--"



THATCH!

HEY!!

WHAT  
ARE YOU  
DOING?!

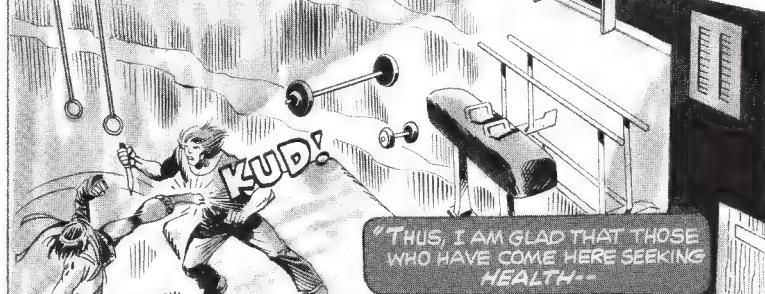
"--BY THE KNIFE  
WHICH HAS  
TERRORIZED A  
CITY."

"IT IS HIM. I DUCK **BELOW** THE  
KNIFE AND **LAUNCH** MYSELF  
INTO HIM..."









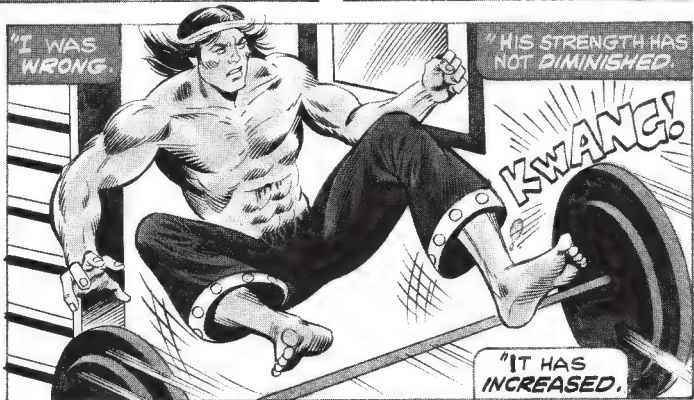
"THUS, I AM GLAD THAT THOSE WHO HAVE COME HERE SEEKING HEALTH--"

SOMEBODY CALL THE COPS--!!

CALL 'EM YOURSELF-- I'M GETTIN' OUT OF HERE!

--NOW REALIZE THAT THEY MAY FIND IT ONLY BEYOND THESE WALLS.







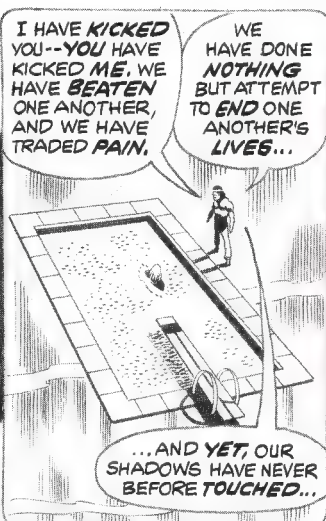






WHAT WILL YOU SHOW ME THAT WE HAVE NOT **ALREADY** SHOWN EACH OTHER?

MY HANDS HAVE BATTERED **YOUR BODY**--  
YOUR HANDS HAVE DONE THE SAME TO ME.



I HAVE **KICKED** YOU--**YOU** HAVE KICKED ME. WE HAVE **BEATEN** ONE ANOTHER, AND WE HAVE TRADED PAIN.

WE HAVE DONE **NOTHING** BUT ATTEMPT TO **END** ONE ANOTHER'S LIVES...

...AND YET, OUR SHADOWS HAVE NEVER BEFORE **TOUCHED**...



OUR **HANDS** HAVE NEVER BEFORE CLASPED IN **GREETING**.

WE DO NOT **KNOW** EACH OTHER...

...AND YET WE **HATE** EACH OTHER...

WHY?

"HE IS **SILENT**, AND PERHAPS **CONFUSED**... BUT FOR THE **FIRST TIME**, IN HIS **CONFUSION**, HE IS NOT **AGGRESSIVE**."

"THE LIGHT OF **INSANITY** HAS NOT BEEN WASHED SO EASILY FROM HIS EYES... BUT HIS EYES **SHOW** THAT HE WILL **LISTEN**."

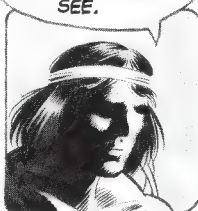
YOU ARE **FILLED** WITH GREAT PAIN, THIS I CAN **SEE**.

BUT YOU CANNOT **RID** YOURSELF OF THAT PAIN BY **GIVING** IT TO **OTHERS**.

YOU CANNOT BRING **NEW LIFE** TO YOUR SOUL BY **KILLING**. THIS YOU **MUST** **SEE**.

YOU MUST **UNDERSTAND** YOUR PAIN IF YOU ARE TO **FIGHT** IT. WHAT **IS** YOUR PAIN? WHAT **MAKES** YOU KILL, MY FRIEND?

...FRIEND...?





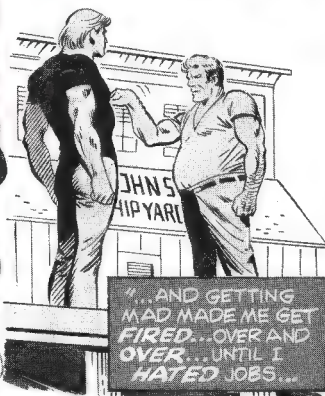


"YOU CALL ME FRIEND AND YOU ASK WHAT MY PAIN IS. MY PAIN IS LIFE.

"MY FATHER BEATING MY MOTHER.

"...AFTER BEATING ME.

"IT MADE ME MAD-- EVEN WHEN I COULD GET A JOB...

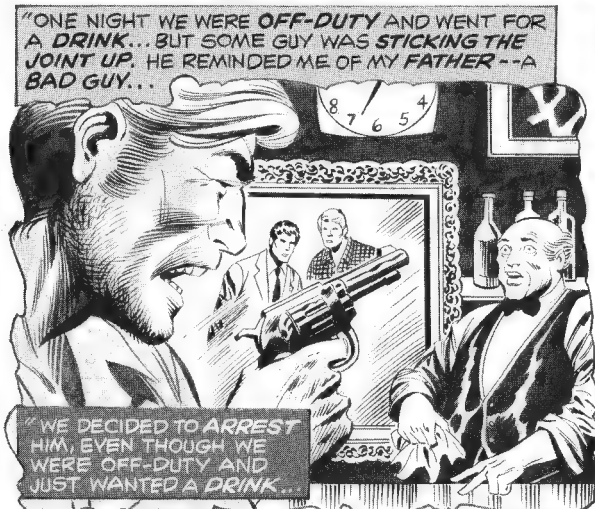


"...AND GETTING MAD MADE ME GET FIRED...OVER AND OVER...UNTIL I HATED JOBS...

"THEN I GOT A JOB I LIKED. I BECAME A COP AND BECAUSE I KNEW I WAS A GOOD GUY...I WAS HAPPY. MY FATHER WAS A BAD GUY BUT HE COULDN'T TOUCH ME WHEN I BECAME A COP.



"I EVEN MADE A FRIEND AS A COP--MY PARTNER...MY ONLY FRIEND...THE ONLY ONE WHO KNEW ME.



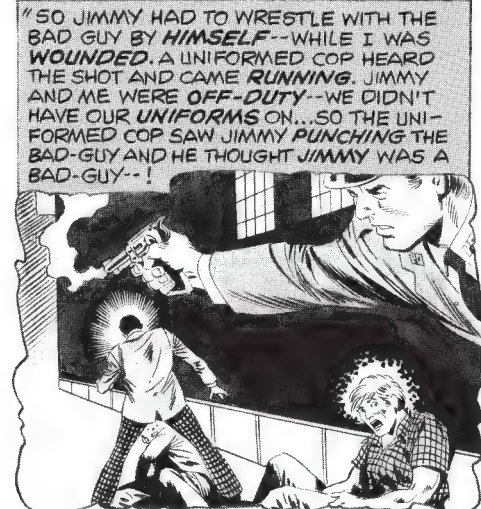
"ONE NIGHT WE WERE OFF-DUTY AND WENT FOR A DRINK... BUT SOME GUY WAS STICKING THE JOINT UP. HE REMINDED ME OF MY FATHER--A BAD GUY...

"WE DECIDED TO ARREST HIM, EVEN THOUGH WE WERE OFF-DUTY AND JUST WANTED A DRINK...

"BUT HE RAN OUT INTO THE STREET WHEN HE SAW WE WERE COPS. WE STILL WANTED TO ARREST HIM, SO WE CHASED HIM. JIMMY-- THAT WAS MY PARTNER'S NAME, MY FRIEND --HE TACKLED THE GUY...



"...AND I GOT SHOT BY A BULLET.



"SO JIMMY HAD TO WRESTLE WITH THE BAD GUY BY HIMSELF--WHILE I WAS WOUNDED. A UNIFORMED COP HEARD THE SHOT AND CAME RUNNING. JIMMY AND ME WERE OFF-DUTY--WE DIDN'T HAVE OUR UNIFORMS ON...SO THE UNIFORMED COP SAW JIMMY PUNCHING THE BAD-GUY AND HE THOUGHT JIMMY WAS A BAD-GUY--!

"THE WAY JIMMY DIED WAS REAL FAST, TOO. HE DIDN'T EVEN SAY ANYTHING...HE JUST BLED A LOT...

"HE WAS MY PARTNER. HE WAS A GOOD GUY JUST TRYING TO DO SOMETHING GOOD.



"...AND THEY SHOT HIM FOR IT...

"THEY TOOK MY ONLY FRIEND AWAY!"

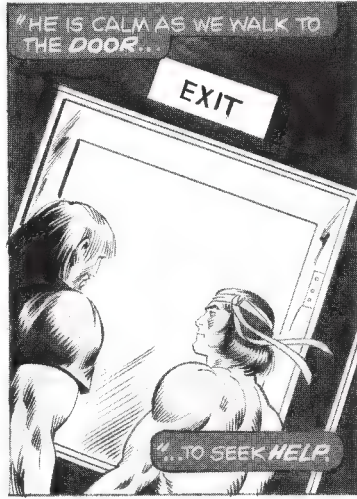
AND YOU CALL ME FRIEND... AND YOU ASK WHAT MAKES ME KILL...

LIFE MAKES ME KILL.



"..."





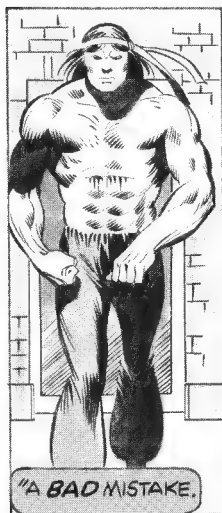




"THE POLICE OFFICER HAS *KILLED* WITHOUT *THINKING*..."



"AND *THIS* HAS COMMITTED A *MISTAKE*..."



"A *BAD* MISTAKE."



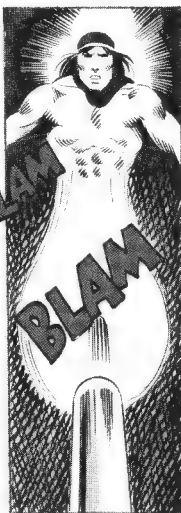
HEY, YOU--  
STOP  
WHERE  
YOU ARE--!



I'M  
WARNING  
YOU!



--STOP  
OR I'LL  
SHOOT!!



"HELP..."

MAP

HAI--

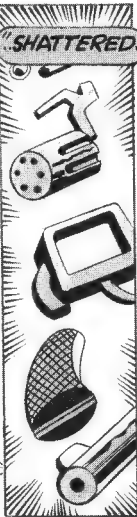
--YAHH!

KLAK



"...HAS  
BEEN..."

KRAKCH



"SHATTERED."



"AND AS I LEAVE IT, IN  
SILENCE..."

"...I AM SORRY."

FIN





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# Swords for Hire



by J. David Warner

Surprisingly, considering the size and boom of their corporation, **Warner Brothers** haven't released very many of what seems to be the current manna of box office trends—martial arts films. What they have released has been, at least in this reviewer's opinion, the pick of the crop (and no, my last name has nothing to do with my opinions). These films are **FIVE FINGERS OF DEATH** and, of course, **ENTER THE DRAGON!** Finally, Warners has released a new entry, titled **THE SACRED KNIVES OF VENGEANCE** and, while it may be a cut (no pun intended) below its aforementioned predecessors, it is a rousing, volatile action film promising frenzied fighting, bloody death and some "character scenes" that balance into a pleasantly entertaining package.

We're finally beginning to get some variation and substance into our diet. The story (and sure enough, in between all those fights, there really is one) revolves around a small city in China (time period uncertain) that is controlled by the **Black Dragon Society**. The Black Dragons run rackets and smuggling operations and have a whole network of corrupt public officials. They are Japanese, but that is only natural—and we've been all through this before.

There are three principle characters, three ex-circus performers who haven't seen each other in ten years. **Ma I** has become a sort of customs policeman, the girl **Yu Chiao** has become a singer, and our hero, **Hsieh Chun** is a wandering knife-for-hire. Chun is conned by a man who once helped him and is now a member of the Black

Dragon Society. They want to bring shipments of illegal guns in from the docks, but Master Wang's school keeps stopping them. This "friend" convinces Chun that the school people are the real villains who are corrupting officials.

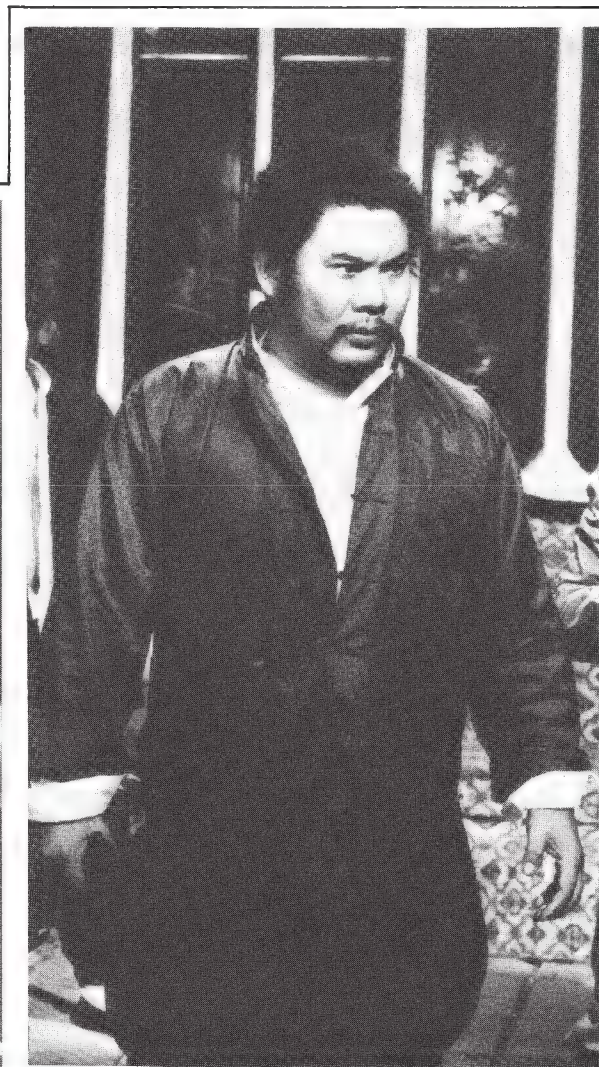
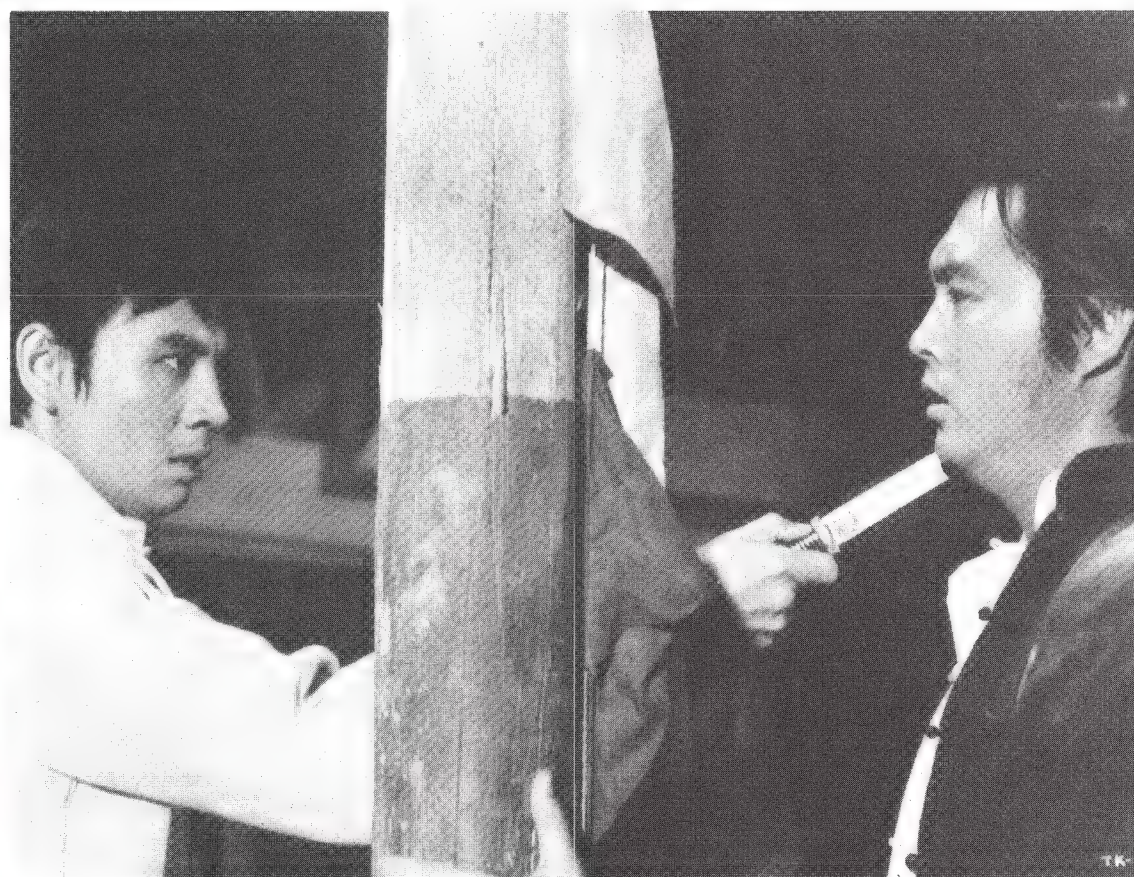
Chun proceeds eagerly to his task. Chun is an oddly unsympathetic (not to mention unsympathizing) hero, at times seeming over-eager to fight, wreaking more havoc than the villains. Still, in an age of **FRENCH CONNECTIONS** and Clint Eastwoods, it hardly seems shocking.

Anyway, he soon discovers that Yu Chiao lives in this city. Then Ma I shows up as an officer in charge of ousting the Black Dragon society. The two old friends, Chun and Ma I, find themselves at opposite ends of a bitter rope. Ma I has a job to do and Chun is far too proud to admit he could have been duped!

And so the mix-up goes, with Ma I and Hsieh Chun becoming more avidly hostile, until all reason is dissolved and both are out for blood. But Chun realizes the truth, when the entire Black Dragon force turns out to kill our knife-welding hero. Badly outnumbered, Ma I and Chun are nearly killed; then, finally, the local cavalry (I've not quite decided what it was really supposed to be) shows up with guns, which seem to be the best method of ending a kung fu/karate battle.

One of the more interesting aspects of this film is that it is the first Hong Kong kung fu film I've seen in some time that has a fairly good representation of a **Samurai**. Samurais in these films are usually inept bumbleres, managing their swords as if they were dead mackerels. But here we have a Samurai that actually poses a serious threat to our hero(es).





The sets were generally good. This film has a penchant for break-apart props—anything from chairs to benches to brick walls. Photography was actually very good, but there weren't enough outdoor shots.

My only real complaint about the film is that, at 100 minutes, it needs editing. There are several weak character scenes that became extremely tedious. The dialogue is the usual silliness, with the usual unintentional humor, but then these aren't exactly classic theater pieces.

So go, enjoy—there're a lot of thrills and action here. As long as you're not expecting another **ENTER THE DRAGON**, **THE SACRED KNIVES OF VENGEANCE** should hit the spot!

#### FEARLESS FIGHTERS

I'm not altogether sure this review isn't in the wrong

magazine—unless someone pulls some surprises on me, this is appearing in **THE DEADLY HANDS OF KUNG FU**. At first glance, it seems an appropriate enough place for a kung fu movie review—however, I'm not convinced. My hands keep trying to sneak **SAVAGE TALES** onto the pay voucher, in that little slot where they ask for the name of the magazine.

The film in question is **FEARLESS FIGHTERS** from Sam Wuh films and—while it is indeed a kung fu film—it is more a fantasy. Most, if not all, of the kung fu is so far-removed from reality and/or practical application that it is far better and certainly fairer to judge this film for its fantasy rather than for its kung fu.

Heroic fantasy!

Whether dyed-in-the-loincloth Conan fans wish to have much to do with the Chi-swordspeople (both male and female) or not, it is fantasy, and it is indeed heroic in every breast-swelling, blood-rushing, deliciously-naive

sense of the word. And, perhaps most of all, it is fun!

There is another side to **FEARLESS FIGHTERS**, for the heroic fantasy is entwined and cleverly bastardized by super-hero fantasy. From the opening scenes with our master chi-swordsman, throwing leaves and sticking them like darts into tree trunks, the film rockets off with the blood-sting of a bull whip, and catapults to a frantic final battle that rivals the sprawling almost-Armageddons of the mighty **Thor's** Asgard. Like I said—fun!

Before I carry on with this review, it might be helpful if I explained what I mean by chi-swordspeople. Chi, in extremely oversimplified terms, is a current of energy—the essence of the inner self—a whole of which most people have mastered nary a trickle. To master it is to open new horizons, to ultimately extend the heights and capabilities of the senses—if the chi-swordspeople are good enough, they can leap across valleys, stick leaves in tree trunks, throw fireballs . . . get the picture?

A sensei known as the **Lightning Whipper** is transporting gold to his home, when the evil swordsman, **Topar**, and his men—in a ploy to steal the gold—offer assistance. Suspicious, Lightning Whipper declines and asks Topar to leave. A battle breaks out. Lightning Whipper, whose weapon is indeed a whip, lives up to his reputation and drives the evil swordsmen off. Topar then goes to his brother, **Leh Pong**, who is master swordsman of the Eagle Claw Clan; but Leh Pong also accuses Topar of wanting to steal the gold. Topar and his gang storm off.

As Lightning Whipper comes to a certain point in the forest, he is assaulted by an ambush of Topar's archers. He is fatally wounded and forced to leave the gold behind, as he uses his last strength to ride as fast as he can to his school. Topar is gloating over his gold when Leh Pong appears and takes it right out from under Topar's inferior fighting skill.





Hero that he is, Leh Pong decides to wait until night to return the gold, so he can do it on the sly and avoid implicating his brother. But the police arrive shortly, tipped off by Topar that Leh Pong has stolen the gold. Topar and company then attack, pretending to try silencing their captured "co-conspirator." This makes the evidence against Leh Pong pretty conclusive. But, as soon as the police have left with him, Topar and company steal the gold and murder Pong's entire family. Everyone, that is, except Leh Pong's young son, who is rescued at the last moment by master chi-swordswoman, **Lady Teh**. She promises to take the child to his father.

Lightning Whipper returns to his school, reveals that the gold was stolen, but doesn't say by whom before he dies. His prize pupil, **Chen Yee Chung**, and Chen's sister (both master chi-swordpeople) vow to avenge their master's death. They find out about Leh Pong and, believing he is the one, plot for revenge.

Chen gets himself imprisoned for street fighting, in an attempt to get close to Leh Pong. He succeeds, but realizes Pong is innocent and decides they must both go after Topar. So, one jailbreak later, after being joined by Lady Teh, the four decide to work together as a team (yes, Virginia, they are indeed the "fearless fighters" that the title speaks of). Chen's sister doesn't like working

with Leh Pong, as she remains convinced of his guilt for quite some time.

Knowing they are coming for him, Topar sends out a call for the best (evil) kung fu chiswordsmen (villains are sexist) in the land. Two headliners are **Flying Sparrow**, who specializes in twin moonswords, and **Solar Ray**, who battles with two very shiny metal disks which, by reflecting sunlight, cause small explosions. But the real big cheese is **The Loner**, also known as One Man Army (shades of Jack Kirby), who has a special sword that becomes two, by splitting in half.

When the Fearless Fighters separate to throw assassins off their trail, Chen's sister is ambushed by the **Dragon Razor** gang. Like Lightning Whipper, she has to face archers. Leh Pong rescues her and takes her to an old abandoned temple for the night. The temple is filled with several large statues—statues that come to life while our duo sleep. They're vampires, actually, also sent (presumably) by Topar, complete with blood-dripping fangs. However, they prove no match for the masterful Leh Pong!

At this point, Chen's sister realizes the truth about Leh Pong and is very sorry about the way she acted. The four of them get together to battle Topar's Kung Fu experts, but just when things are going well, One Man Army steps

in and defeats Leh Pong. Topar, delighted, kicks Leh Pong over a rocky cliff—and we sadly conclude that he has been dashed on the rocks below.

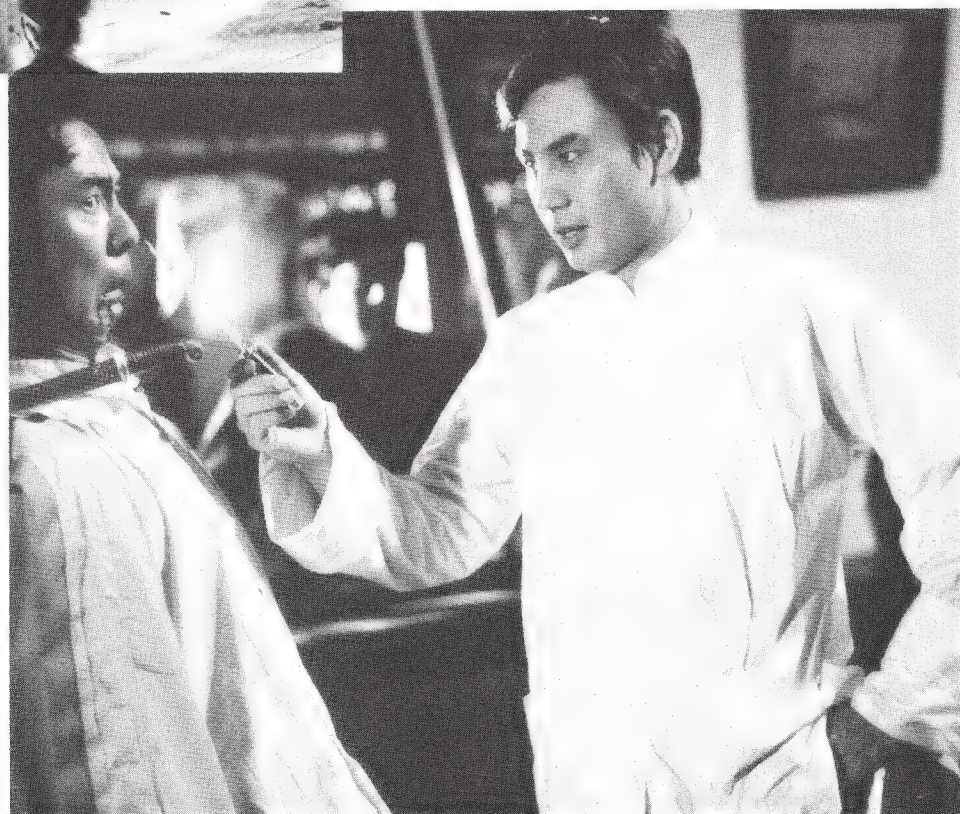
And how wrong we are, for Leh Pong is rescued by an ancient master, an old hermit who lives in a cave. He replaces Leh Pong's shattered limbs with invincible weapons and turns our hero into a walking (or, in this case, limping) arsenal. Pong returns, to battle One Man Army, and kills him. He's loaded with secret weapons, but he saves a very special one for Topar, who is about to kill the other Fearless Fighters.

Leh stops his brother, and they have a deadly battle. Leh was instructed not to use his special weapons for revenge, so he tries to take Topar alive to the police, but Topar uses treachery, thus forcing Leh Pong to employ that special weapon—which we're not about to reveal!

The movie is, as I said, delightful. It also has some of the best looking swords I've seen—if you're into that. The cast is good, the stunts are clever, if not always convincing, and the whole thing is a popcorn-munching jubilee!

#### CHUSHINGURA

Japan has, in its time, produced some of the world's





finest cinema on almost every level, including the one we are most concerned with here—martial arts. They've filmed many great and colorful epics of Japanese history, tales of warriors who live by the sword amidst the pageantry of a time and place far removed from now. But perhaps the single most definitive Japanese film I have seen is Hiroshi Inagaki's magnificent production of **CHUSHINGURA** . . . the revenge of the forty-seven Ronin!

**CHUSHINGURA** is a masterwork in almost every aspect. It is filled with exciting swordplay, yet its script is deep, sensitive, lovingly researched and slickly executed. Its themes are rebellion against the injustices of a despotic government, in an era of elegance and luxury during which, until the incident upon which this film centers, the *bushido* code of the **Samurai** had been half forgotten. The rebel theme provides a rousing catalyst for intrigue and excitement.

The film is divided into two sections—*Flowers* and *Snow*. *Flowers* opens the film in March of 1701. **Lord Asano** has been chosen to receive and entertain Imperial envoys who have come to call on the **Shogunate** (translates as "King") in Edo. **Lord Kira**, the Grand Master of Ceremonies for the Shogunate, has been chosen to oversee the affair.

Kira, aside from being of greedy disposition and an inhumanly vain man—as if that would bring back youth to his time-worn wrinkled body—also has a personal grudge against Asano. Some time ago Asano had refused Kira's request to show the elder how to produce salt, a profitable commodity. On top of that, Kira expects a costly gift for every little bit of advice he gives, but the young, idealistic Asano will not participate in anything that smacks so much of bribery.

Thus, Kira takes demonic pleasure in fouling things up for Lord Asano, even insisting Asano throw out a whole room of mats and have new ones woven before the envoys arrive. Asano tries to reconcile the situation within himself by keeping in mind the importance of his posi-



tion. For two days a begrudging peace is maintained. But on the third and most important day, the day the Shogun himself will visit the ceremonies, Asano reaches his breaking point. In a fit of rage, provoked beyond endurance, he draws his sword and wounds the Lord Kira.

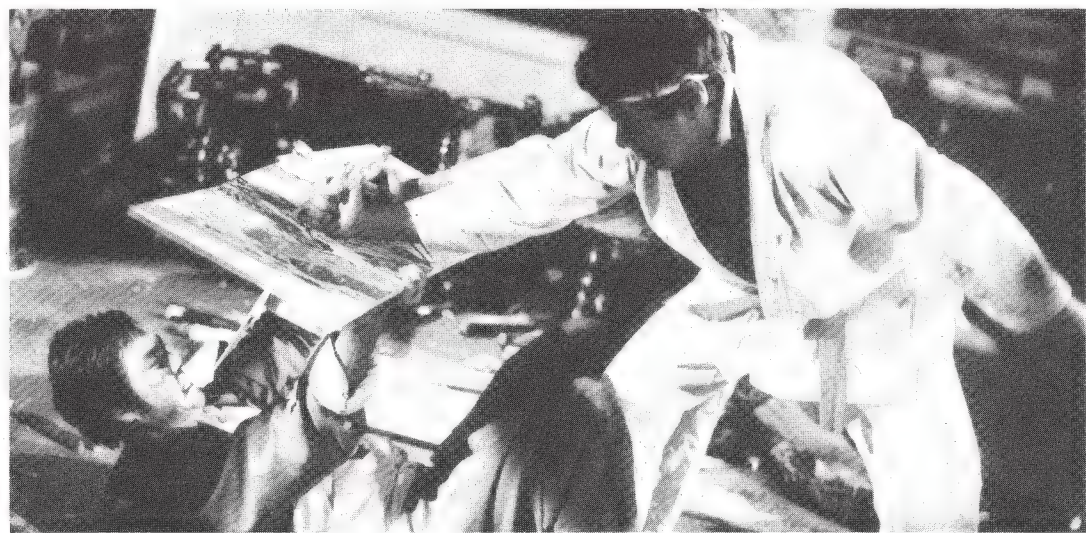
The price for his act is costly! Although Kira is not seriously injured, and is allowed to return home with no charges against him, the Lord Asano—without so much as a hearing—is forced to commit *hara-kiri*. Also, the Shogunate demands that his castle be vacated and his clan be abolished!

The late Lord's loyal Chamberlain, **Oishi**, calls a meeting of the Asano house and its retainers. They are faced with a decision—they can fight to retain the castle or turn it over to the authorities. The more radical elements of the clan would choose to fight for the castle, but Oishi realizes that the castle is not the issue here. Nothing short of the death of the Lord Kira will suffice to avenge the wrong done their great Lord. The result is that sixty-odd men sign a pact in blood, to pledge their allegiance to the Chamberlain Oishi. Then they separate.

Oishi retires to a province just outside Kyoto where he takes to the gay life, drinking too much, sleeping in brothels, generally pursuing a life of indiscreet debauchery. At least, that's how it *seems* to the casual observer—and to Lord Kira's spies!

Lord Kira fears repercussions from the Asano retainers, and so starts to hire countless masterless Samurai as bodyguards. He is especially interested in obtaining the services of **Gemba Tawaraboshi** (masterfully played by Toshiro Mifune), who is one of the greatest spearmen, famous throughout the country. But Gemba is far too proud to sell himself for money alone, and he finds particularly little to like in the Lord Kira and his vassals.

Meanwhile, to further put spies off the track, Oishi divorces his wife; this will also protect his two youngest children. Only **Chikara**, Oishi's eldest son, remains with him.









Somewhere about here *Flowers* ends and *Snow* begins.

Kira builds a new home—which is designed specifically to safeguard him against attack by the Asano men he still fears—including countless secret passages. But Oishi has his own spies, who check on the mansion in the guise of workers and merchants.

It's winter.

The Asano men gather secretly at an Inn to discuss how best to take the mansion, so that Lord Kira does not escape them. Their numbers have shrunk to forty-seven—for whatever reasons the others have not shown, those remaining must carry on without them.

Now the date is December 14, 1701. Snow falls in a pure, white, unsullied blanket on the ground, as if to protect the soil from the blood that will inevitably spill this dawn. Forty-seven Ronin march stoically from the Inn, dressed impressively in black with white trim, to the mansion of Lord Kira!

That final battle is magnificent. Neighbors, sympathetic to the Asano cause, refuse to let Kira's men escape through their estates. The only other route of escape is guarded by none other than Gamba Tawaraboshi and his impassable lance. In a furious and bloody conflict, the Asano men kill all of Kira's bodyguards—but Lord Kira is nowhere to be found. The Ronin are weary and disappointed, but suddenly a signal is heard—Lord Kira has been found.

Handing the Lord a shortsword, they force him to commit *hara-kiri*.

When the avengers march through the town, they are cheered as heroes, as they proceed to Lord Asano's grave to tell of what they've done. After much deliberation, the Shogunate passes a judgment of death for the forty-seven, but they are *not* executed as common criminals. They are allowed to die by their own hands, as is fitting for the true Samurai they are!

The ending may not completely satisfy you, but remember that this is history and—more importantly—you must understand the *bushido* code of the Samurai. To the Samurai, his own life meant little, for the wishes and honor of his Lord were the prime directives.

**CHUSINGURA** is somewhere near three-and-a-half hours long. It is deeply involved with a plot not unlike a Shakespeare tragedy, yet its tremendous length zips by. More than a historical epic filled with pageantry, it is an exciting adventure-suspense film with intrigues and action unmatched!

The last battle in the film is one of the most magnificent, brilliantly-choreographed fight sequences I have seen. The black costumes against the white snow is a remarkable touch; the movie doesn't have the kind of non-stop action you may be used to in the kung fu flicks, but somehow I suspect you won't mind!

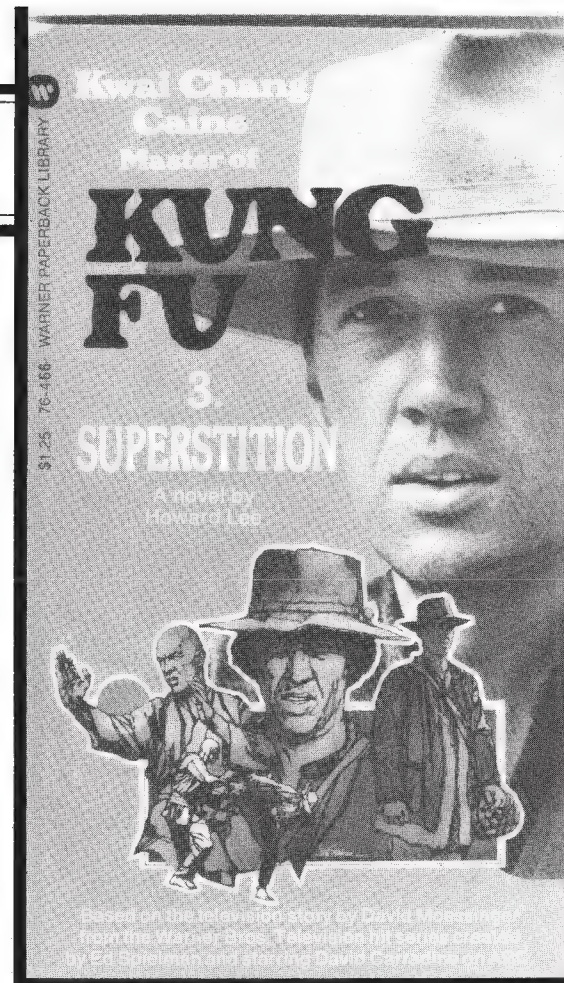
The cast is superb, especially **Koshiro Matsumoto** as the brooding, plotting Oishi, and **Chusha Ichikawa** as the villain, Lord Kira. Also very fine, of course, was **Toshiro Mifune**. While his part was relatively small, his presence is remarkable, and cheers rise from the audience as he makes his entrances.

**Hiroshi Inagaki** is an inconsistent director. He is responsible for the **SAMURAI TRILOGY**, which I liked a lot, **DAREDEVIL IN THE CASTLE**, which I found middling, and **BANDITS ON THE WIND**, which I detested. Luckily, with all his inconsistency, Inagaki chose **CHUSINGURA** to do his very best job—it emerges as a film worthy of Kurosawa or Okamoto.

See this film. If it's not currently playing ask some of your nearby independent theaters and/or art cinema houses to get it. I give **CHUSINGURA** the highest recommendations possible. This is martial arts at its best!







by David Anthony Kraft

**K**ung Fu.

I can remember when it was only an advertisement in the comic books for a home study course in an "obscure" Oriental fighting art, and not a catchphrase for an entire genre of popular entertainment in movies, books, television and—yes—those selfsame comics. In a very short period of time, it has mushroomed into a clearly-recognized field comparable to westerns, gothic romance or science fiction, spawning a litter of films and paperbacks that run the gamut from exciting to rotten.

It's a phenomenon almost similar to cloning, and certain well-defined formulas have developed almost exclusively as storylines, with a few notable exceptions. There's always a venerable old Master under whom the protagonist studies or has studied. Very often, there's an antagonist, studying under another, more corrupt Master at a rival school of the Martial Arts, and a feud soon develops wherein the good Master is killed. From then on, it's our hero against the hordes of evil. Or variations on the theme. Oh, and we musn't forget the free-for-all Martial Arts tournament plot, either.

A few exceptions to the general trend come to mind, which have established their own peculiar storylines, such as TV's *Kung Fu* series, starring David Carradine,

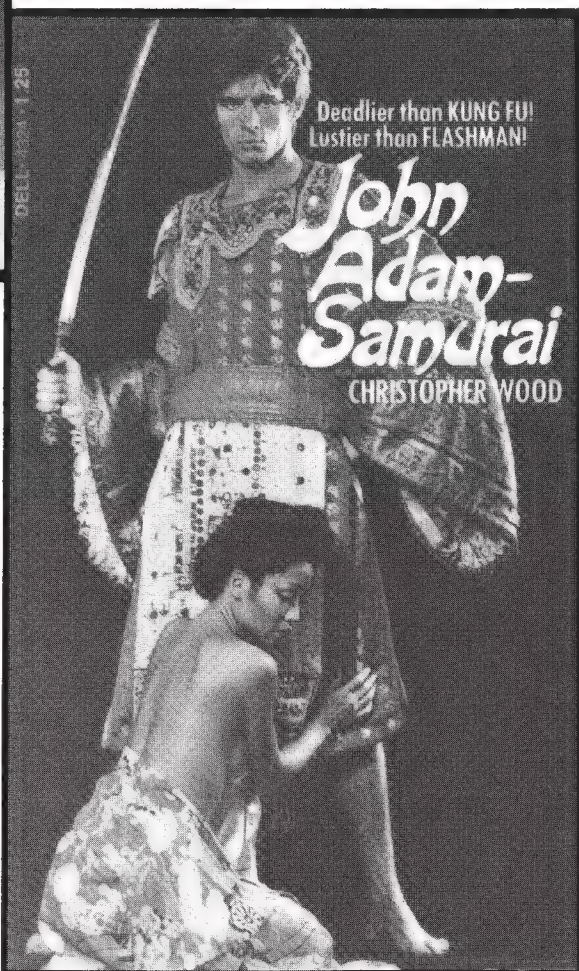
## KUNG FU IN

which kicked off the whole craze, or even Marvel's own Shang-Chi or Iron Fist.

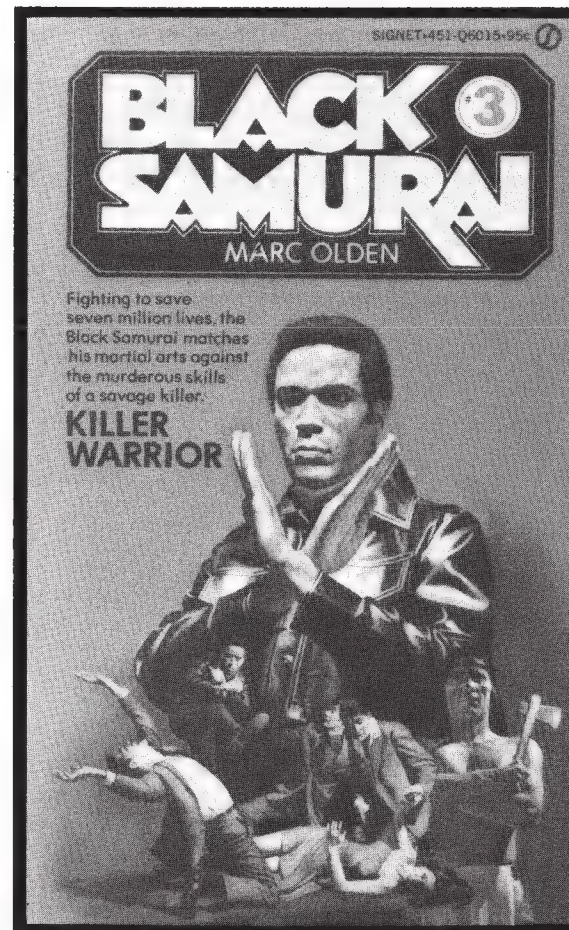
The paperbacks, however, have chosen to pick up mainly on the well-traveled themes of the classic Hong Kong film fare, since they seem to lend themselves so well to a melodramatic pulp-action style of galloping prose. Again, the exceptions are rare, although they do exist.

It has been—and remains—the policy of **DEADLY HANDS** to treat the various Kung Fu movies and paperbacks individually in somewhat more in-depth critiques; this column is, rather, an attempt at an overview of the Kung Fu paperback field in general—a quick look at what's going on in the stiffly competitive (and often imitative) softcover battleground.

In no particular order, then, let's start with **JOHN ADAM—SAMURAI**, written by Christopher Wood. This is a sensuous, somewhat erotic approach to the standard fare, set in unexplored Japan. The literary level



## THE PAPERBACKS



is slightly more sophisticated than most of the entries being offered up, but that's only because Dell cheated by reprinting a 1971 novel which was published before the pervading influence of the Kung Fu movement had created the demand for this type of material. And they have the nerve to charge \$1.25 for it, yet!

Ballantine Books, meantime, has brought out a novelization of the Capital Productions release, **SUPER-MANCHU**. The book bears the additional line, Master of Kung Fu, and is credited to one "Sean Mei Sullivan," with an introduction by Bong Su Han. Hyped as "Cooler than Bond—Quicker than Fly—Deadlier than Shaft," and also priced at a buck and a quarter, the paperback has the added benefit of movie tie-in sales, which should net the publishers a significant amount of additional readers. It's an old gimmick that still seems to work well.

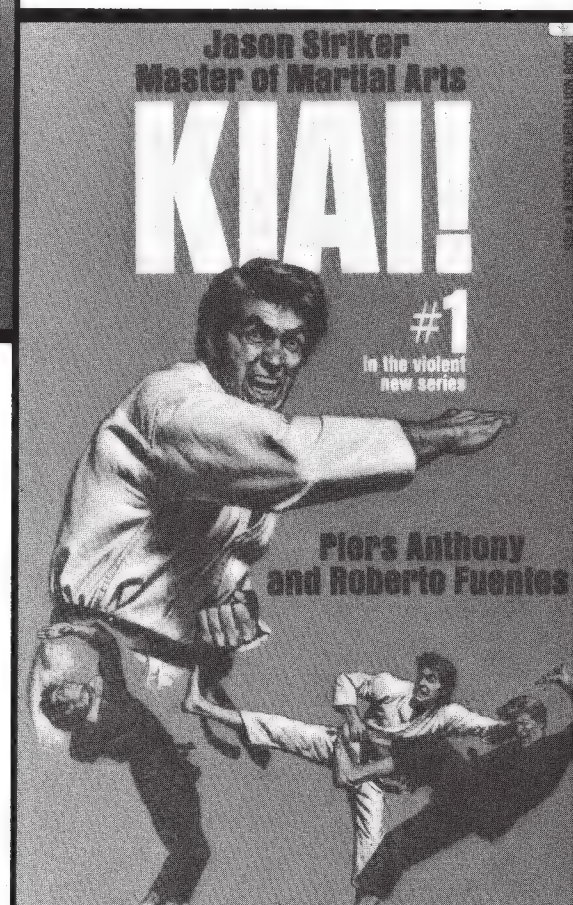
And then there's **BLACK SAMURAI #1** (that's the full title) by Marc Olden. This one "only" costs 95¢. It's the intriguing account of Robert Sand, who is rescued

and trained for seven years by a Japanese master Samurai, until military racists come along, killing his brother and his Master (I could make a nasty comment here about how this all somehow seems familiar), whereon Sand embarks on a mission of revenge and destruction.

The sequel, **THE GOLDEN KILL**, follows Sand in his campaign against the "secret masters" who bind corporations, armies, governments and such-like into a global network of money and power. And violence. Signet is usually selective in regards to publishing slightly more literate material than the competition, even in the case of a series of this nature; therefore, that's something to keep in mind if you're undecided about where to begin.

The first two Black Samurai books have been rather rapidly followed by two more, indicating that Signet seems to be serious about making a determined assault on the market. The third title, **KILLER WARRIOR**, brings Robert Sand around to defying a rich Japanese murder master, and—shades of originality—draws him into a suspenseful attempt to save wayward New York from atomic destruction. Needless to say, he succeeds.

**THE DEADLY PEARL**, the fourth episode in the Black Samurai epic, concerns itself with a somewhat less







pedestrian plot, in which Robert Sand comes into conflict with a Pimp King (I quote: "Lord of Lust"), who wields a lethal sword cane as one of his more flamboyant accomplishments. Signet has been holding the line on these books, keeping them at 95¢, which—in today's pervasive trend of ever-accelerating prices—is highly commendable. And which may just be the deciding factor in your eventual decision of what series to pick up on, particularly if you're hard-up for cash.

Elsewhere, Piers Anthony and Robert Fuentes have teamed up to produce Jason Striker—Master of Martial Arts, 95¢ from Berkley. Number one is titled KIAI! and details the shennanigans at a lawless, no-holds-barred tournament (sound familiar?). Actually, this is a com-

petently-written, fascinating book, although probably not exploitive enough to capture the casual reader's fancy; still, it's an aficionados delight. Time will tell whether a sequel follows. In fact, don't be surprised if one already has by the time this article appears on the newsstands, since one of the perils of publishing is that a couple months intervene between a survey like this and its appearance in print—a necessary evil having to do with production, printing, distribution, etc.

In passing, I should also mention here that these two authors—Anthony and Fuentes—have collaborated on at least one shorter story for *Vertex* magazine (in the June 1974 issue), about an Oriental Master in a science-fictional kind of adventure; I've no idea whether this is a part of a series, and it's definitely not your standard Martial Arts plot—but recommended, heartily recommended.

Thus far, the K'ing Kung Fu series has the most titles in print; written by Marshall Macao (a house pseudonym—Sandy Sidar III authored all but the fourth book), they concern the adventures of Chong Fei K'ing in a long-running battle with his ruthless antagonist, Kak Nan Tang, who in the initial story kills the venerable Master. The first four volumes—SON OF THE FLYING TIGER, RETURN OF THE OPIUM WARS, THE RAPE OF SUN LEE FONG, and THE KAK-ABDULLAH CONSPIRACY—were reviewed in more detail in *THE DEADLY HANDS OF KUNG FU* #5.

Since that time, a fifth and a sixth have hit the stands—RED PLAGUE IN BOLIVIA and NEW YORK NECROMANCY. The former title is a double pun on the demonic Red Circle cult and their latest plot, which involves a "bizarre pestilence carefully nurtured by renegade scientists in Zedak's underworld laboratories" (I don't think I could have summed it up any more succinctly than that); the latter places K'ing in Harlem, where Kak has been committing a number of cult murders under the prompting of the Amazonian sorceress, Queshaka. As you may have expected, the usual pulp elements—the ghetto, gangsters, the demon Zedak, etc.—abound.

A seventh volume is slated to follow soon, titled *THE MARK OF THE VULTURE*, and will probably be on sale by the time you read these words, since—if New York paperback bookstores are any indication—the series has been selling fantastically despite distribution problems.

In sheer terms of design, the K'ing Kung Fu books are possibly the most commercial, and by having a number of them available I think that Freeway Press may well have chosen the best way to capitalize on the avid market for this infant genre; certainly, the appeal of a pulp-style high-action series cannot be denied, in whatever field—just take a look at your local newsstand for the proliferation of series paperbacks, if you doubt my word.

Ah, and now the Warner pocketbook versions of their television bonanza, Kwai Chang Caine—Master of KUNG FU! Presently there are four slim servings available, all attributed to one "Howard Lee." (If I seem to take exception to some of these bylines, it's only because most of them are weird combinations of Western and Oriental names served up as token pseudonyms...an amusing trick which soon grows tiresome.) Each of the books has a fat price, though—the now already-traditional \$1.25.

THE WAY OF THE TIGER, THE SIGN OF THE

DRAGON is the first novelization and, by over-exposure on TV, I think probably the most familiar plot to anyone at all interested in the Martial Arts media movement. Briefly, it recounts Caine's attachment to a coolie gang building a railroad, and the incidents which befall him. Second in the series is *CHAINS*, in which soft-spoken Caine escapes jail chained to a very rough co-prisoner; he must not only deal with this rude companion, but evade pursuit as well.

*SUPERSTITION* follows, and again our protagonist is a prisoner, this time mining silver; I can't help, when reading Caine's dialogue, but hear it with my "inner ear" as it would be spoken by David Carradine. The fourth and final entry is *A PRAYING MANTIS KILLS*, wherein Kwai Chang Caine witnesses a murder and, unlike those who pretend not to have seen it, tells the truth. How successfully these books have been received is a mystery, but their connection with the eminently-successful television show almost guarantees them a decent sales figure, and it's entirely possible that further efforts will follow.

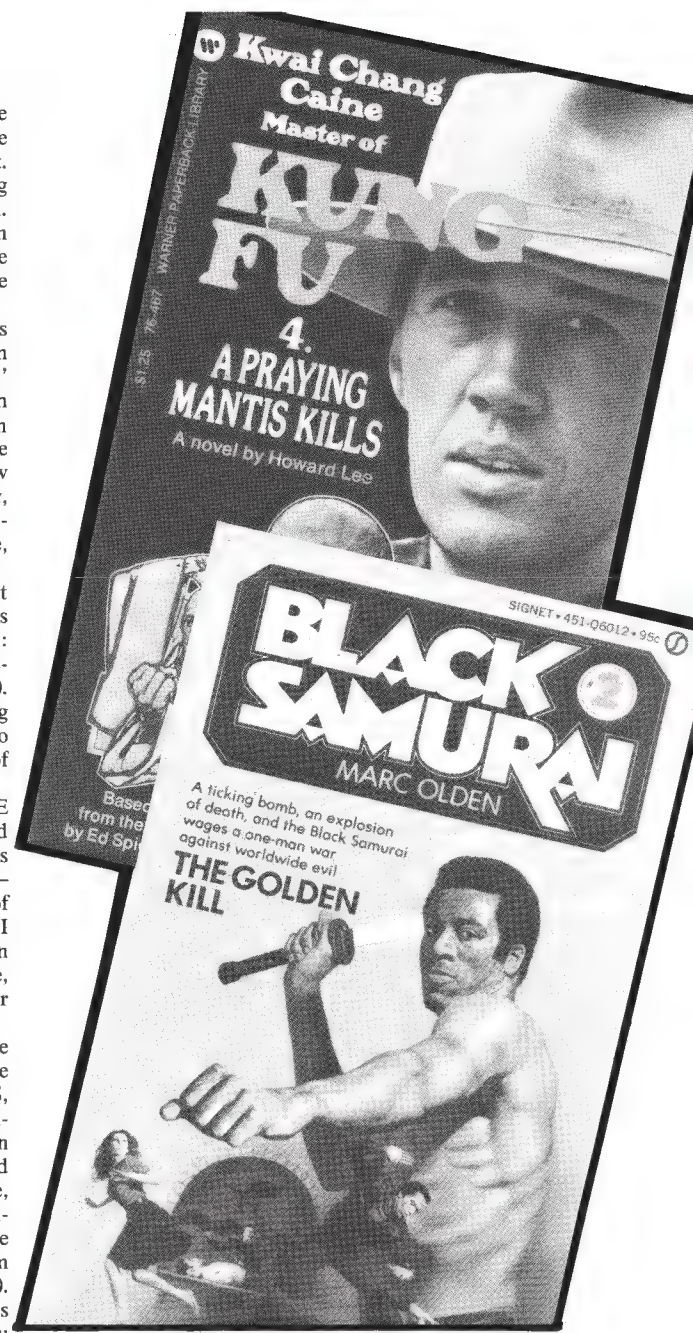
Quite obviously inspired by the aforementioned—at least by the TV incarnation—is the Manor Books attempt at a share of the new market...*KUNG FU* #1: *THE YEAR OF THE TIGER* (bears an amazing resemblance to that other famous title, wouldn't you say?). "Lee Chang" (aargh!) chronicles the flashing, smashing exploits of the Eurasian hero, Mace, in his attempts to thwart the Mafia and put the kibosh on a shipment of heroin—all on the high seas, yet.

The second Mace adventure, *THE YEAR OF THE SNAKE*, is all about Tongs, Chinatown, youth gangs and protection rackets. Of all the offerings surveyed in this column, this series is certainly the most poorly written—it reeks of the *worst* of old pulp purple prose; and each of the three books presently available (there will be more, I believe) utilizes a setting and/or plot that has been thoroughly beaten lifeless not merely in a limited genre, but in *all* of popular fiction, whether written, drawn or filmed.

Number three, *THE YEAR OF THE RAT*, has Mace accepting an assignment from the CIA. For, you see, the Chinese Communists have infiltrated agents into the US, Mexico, and Canada, with the eventual intent of unleashing a new virus over this fair continent (presumably in addition to the already-deadly smog, if a disgruntled digression may be permitted here). Russia is, of course, to be blamed. It's the old two-major-powers-at-each-other's throats plot, well worn in Ian Fleming-esque thrillers and old comic books. At least it's a break from the standard Kung Fu genre plot (small consolation). And incidentally, in case you were wondering, the covers of these books proclaim them to be "the first Kung Fu series in print," whatever that has to do with anything.

Finally, there's Mike Roote's paperback novelization of the ultimate Kung Fu movie, *ENTER THE DRAGON*, published by Award Books at 95¢. I'm sure I need not reiterate, however briefly, the excitingly familiar story; suffice to say, it's worth having, although my one complaint is that—as so often occurs in such translations of movies to novels—the author contents himself with matching the screenplay almost scene for scene, when to really stand as a solid book a story requires more than just a skeletal sequence of events.

And now, as the sun slowly sinks in the west and the closing theme music swells as if from nowhere, it's time to bring this episode to an end. Confined primarily to a



survey of Martial Arts fiction in the paperback field, I have attempted to touch, however lightly, on the current offerings available. Very likely, I have overlooked something; and there should almost certainly be some additions to the list by the time you read this. Still, waddaya want—me to steal *all* the excitement of browsing the bookracks from you?

If you're a devotee of fast-action Kung Fu adventure in prose form, there's plenty of it to choose from; so go to it, karateka.

But remember Bruce Lee's words:

"Do not concentrate on the finger, or you miss all that heavenly glory!"

—David Anthony Kraft





# PROLOGUE:

FOUR A.M. THE STORM HAD HIT NEW YORK OVER SIX HOURS AGO AND THE LINES OF THE CITY WERE BLURRED BY THE FIERCE DOWNPOUR...

ABE, WHY DON'T YOU KNOCK IT OFF? YOU'VE BEEN AT IT FOR TWO HOURS ALREADY AND BUDGE HASN'T SAID A THING SINCE WE BROKE OUT OF HIS MIND-CAGE\* AND CAPTURED HIM--

BOB IS RIGHT, ABE. MR. BUDGE HAS APPARENTLY PUT HIMSELF INTO SOME FORM OF DEEP **TRANCE!** IN SUCH A STATE IT IS DOUBTFUL THAT SHOUTING AT HIM WILL ACHIEVE ANY RESULTS!

HELL, HE HASN'T EVEN MOVED!

COME ON, MAN!

\*SEE LAST ISH--DON.

THIS MOTHER DAMN NEAR KILLED US! IF YOU THINK I'M GONNA...

AH--WHAT'S THE USE? YOU'RE PROBABLY **RIGHT**, LIN. I MIGHT AS WELL TRY A HAMMERLOCK ON A LAMP-POST FOR ALL I'M GETTIN' OUTTA THIS DUDE!

SO WHAT DO WE DO NEXT?

WE WAIT.

WAIT!

EXACTLY! IT'S BECOMING CLEAR, WITH EACH ATTACK ON US, THAT THE **SILENT ONES** GROW MORE DETERMINED TO SEE US **DEAD!** WHATEVER IT WAS THAT CAUSED THEM TO **FEAR** MASTER KEE AND TO HAVE HIM **KILLED...**

--GOT PASSED ON TO US, RIGHT?

RIGHT! BUDGE WAS SENT TO **KILL** US AND HE FAILED. THE **SILENT ONES** MUST KNOW BY NOW THAT WE HAVE HIM--

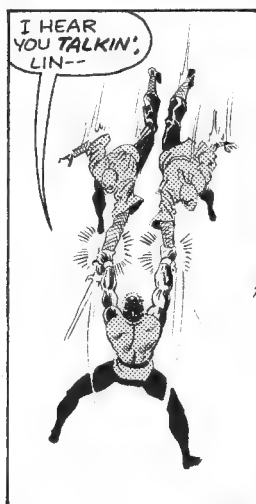
--SO WE SIT **TIGHT**, BOB? IS THAT IT? WE SIT AND **WAIT** FOR THEM TO COME TO US? HOW MANY TIMES ARE WE GONNA HAVE TO BE THE **BLASTED DECOYS** IN THIS GAME? WHEN DO WE GET A CHANCE TO DO THE **HUNTIN'?**

IF THERE IS AN ANSWER, IT IS LOST AS THE STORM WITHOUT **ANNOUNCES** ITSELF IN A **CRASH OF THUNDER** AND AN **ELECTRIC FLASH OF LIGHTNING!**

**BA-WOOH!**

AND, AS CHILLING WIND WHIPS THE **DRAPES ASIDE**, THE **ARRIVAL** OF THE NIGHT IS HERALDED BY THE **ILLUMINATED FORMS** OF THE **MINIONS OF MEN**. THEY KNOW THEIR WAIT IS **ENDED!**









BLUE-FIRE SPEARS OF JAGGED LIGHT TRANSVERSE THE DARKLING SKY. THE NIGHT IS WRACKED WITH PAIN, CONVULSION AFTER CONVULSION, RIPPING OPEN WOUNDS ACROSS ITS TORN AND BLEEDING FACE.

AND TO SOME STILL NOT USED TO THE WAYS OF THE NIGHT, THE ACTIONS OF THOSE WHO ARE COME AS RUDE, UNWELCOME SURPRISE.

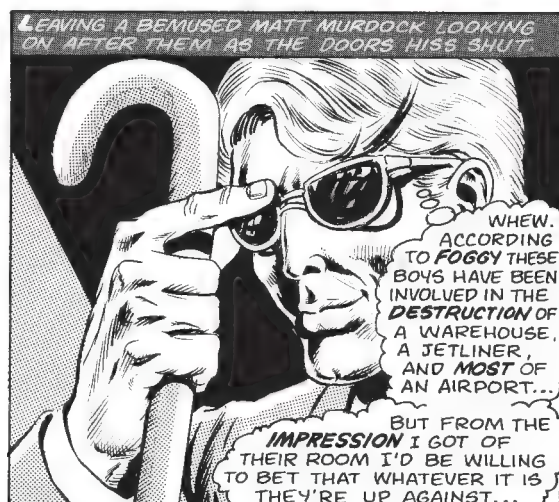
...THE WAY THE NINJA'S ARRIVED!

AND, LIKE A HUGE, OBESE SPIDER, THE MAN CALLED HARRISON BUDGE DESCENDS A SLENDER THREAD TO THE DISTANT STREET UNTIL HE IS LOST TO SIGHT, NO MORE THAN A DUST MOTE IN A...

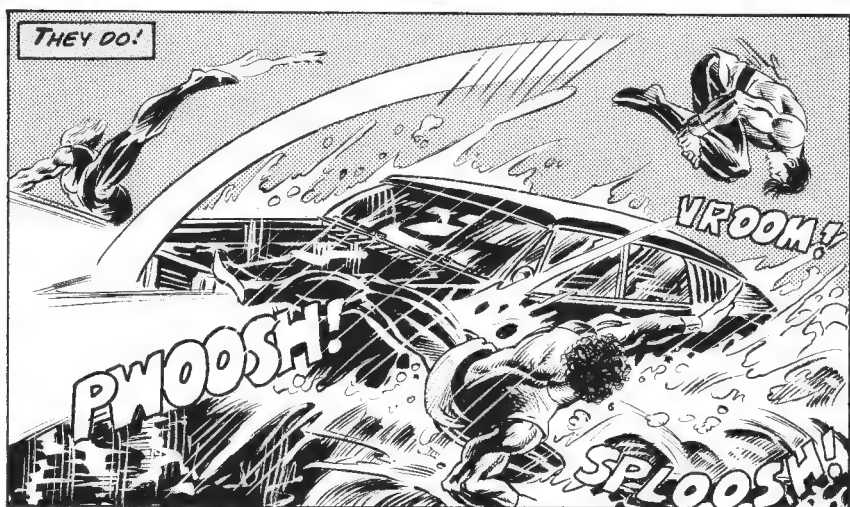
THE SONS OF THE  
**TIGER!**

**STORM  
OF  
VENGEANCE**















TUGBOATS PLOW THEIR WAY THROUGH THE STORM-TOSSED WAVES OF THE NORMALLY STIAID EAST RIVER, PASSING THE LOW SHADOWS OF WELFARE ISLAND, ALMOST LOST IN THE GREATER SHADOW OF THE QUEENSBORO BRIDGE AND THE PYLON THAT RESTS ON THE ISLAND'S CENTER AS IF DRIVEN DEEP INTO ITS HEART.



BENEATH THE BRIDGE AND THE CLOUDED NIGHT-SKY, THE WAVES POUND LIKE THE WINGS OF TIRED SEA BIRDS UPON THE MEAGER REEFS OF THE ISLAND...

...THROWING A CITY'S DEBRIS UPON ITS NARROW, ROCKY BEACHES. BEER CANS, TIRES, THE BODIES OF SUICIDES...



...THREE SHADOWED FORMS ALIVE...

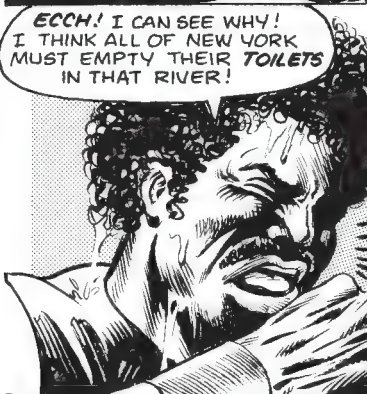


BUT JUST BARELY

MY GOD, LIN, WE MADE IT!

UNNH...

MASTER KEE HAD US SWIM MANY LEAGUES FURTHER THAN THE DISTANCE WE COVERED TONIGHT! THE STORM WAS JUST AN ADDED DISTRACTION! WE WILL NEVER BE SUSPECTED FROM THIS DIRECTION!

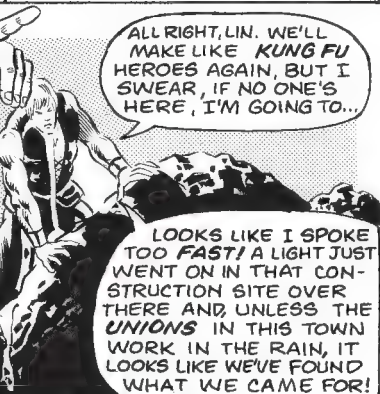


ECCH! I CAN SEE WHY! I THINK ALL OF NEW YORK MUST EMPTY THEIR TOILETS IN THAT RIVER!



ENOUGH TALK! IF WE ARE GOING TO HIT BEFORE THEY SPOT US--

THEN WE'VE GOT TO MOVE FAST!



ALL RIGHT, LIN. WE'LL MAKE LIKE KUNG FU HEROES AGAIN, BUT I SWEAR, IF NO ONE'S HERE, I'M GOING TO...

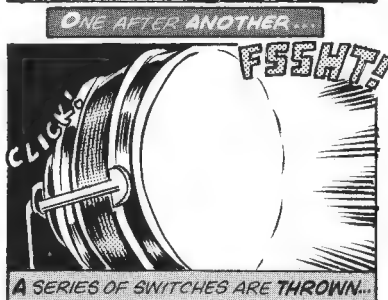
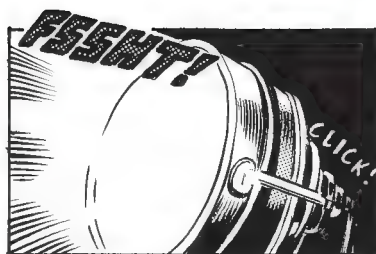
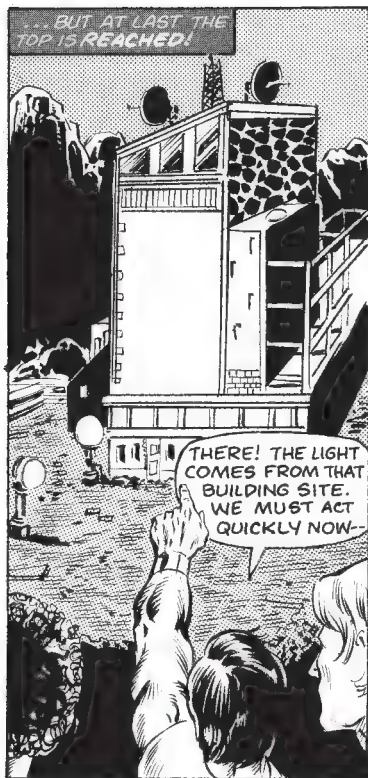
LOOKS LIKE I SPOKE TOO FAST! A LIGHT JUST WENT ON IN THAT CONSTRUCTION SITE OVER THERE AND, UNLESS THE UNIONS IN THIS TOWN WORK IN THE RAIN, IT LOOKS LIKE WE'VE FOUND WHAT WE CAME FOR!

LIN SUN NODS AND THE THREE TIGERS BEGIN TO SCALE THE LOOSE MOUND OF GRAVEL BETWEEN THEM AND THE LIGHT AHEAD. EACH STEP SENDS THE SMALL WET STONES SLIDING AND CHATTERING DOWN THE PILE IN MINIATURE AVALANCHES. THERE IS NO STEADY HAND OR FOOTHOLD...



...AND THEIR PROGRESS IS SLOW, EACH STEP BECOMING MORE AND MORE PAINFUL TO THEIR TIRED MUSCLES...









--SOMETHING MOVING ON TOP OF THE MOUND...

-- CAN'T SEE HIM CLEARLY, I-- WAIT! NOW I CAN! IT'S...



BUDGE!

CORRECT, LIN SUN! HARRISON BUDGE, WHOSE PLANS FOR YOUR DESTRUCTION WERE PERFECT!

THE MASTERS GAVE ME FREE REIN IN DISPOSING OF YOU, PLACED THEIR FAITH IN MY HANDS! THEY KNEW I WOULD SERVE THEM WELL!



-- AND YET YOU THREE MADE ME FAIL IN MY MISSION!

THE MASTERS DO NOT ALLOW FAILURE! FAILURE IS HUMILIATION.



FAILURE IS DEATH!

THAT I'M GOING TO DIE I ACCEPT--



BUT NOT UNTIL I LAY YOUR SHATTERED BODIES BEFORE THE SILENT ONES AS PROOF THAT, IN THE END, I HAVE NOT FAILED THEM!

JUMP FOR IT! THAT MOTHER'S GOT A TOMMY GUN!

I'M JUMPING, ABE! I'M JUMPING!

WE'VE GOT TO GET OUT OF THIS CIRCLE OF LIGHT OR IT WILL ONLY BE A MATTER OF TIME BEFORE HE HITS ONE OF US!

BOB DIAMOND: "I'VE DONE A LOT OF MY OWN STUNTS FOR THE FILMS I'VE STARRED IN, BUT IT'S ONE THING TO RUN AT AN ACTOR..."

ABE BROWN: "WE USED TO PLAY WAR ON THE STREET WHEN I WAS A KID..."

LIN SUN: "A BULLET IS GUIDED BY MAN..."



WELL, THIS ISN'T A FILM--

KA-POW



--AND I AIN'T BACK ON HAIGHT STREET! THIS IS NEW YORK!

ATCHOK!



HIS MIND IS IN MANY PIECES--



"...AND ANOTHER TO RUN HEAD ON AT A MADMAN WHO'S FIRING AT YOU WITH A LIVE MACHINE-GUN!"

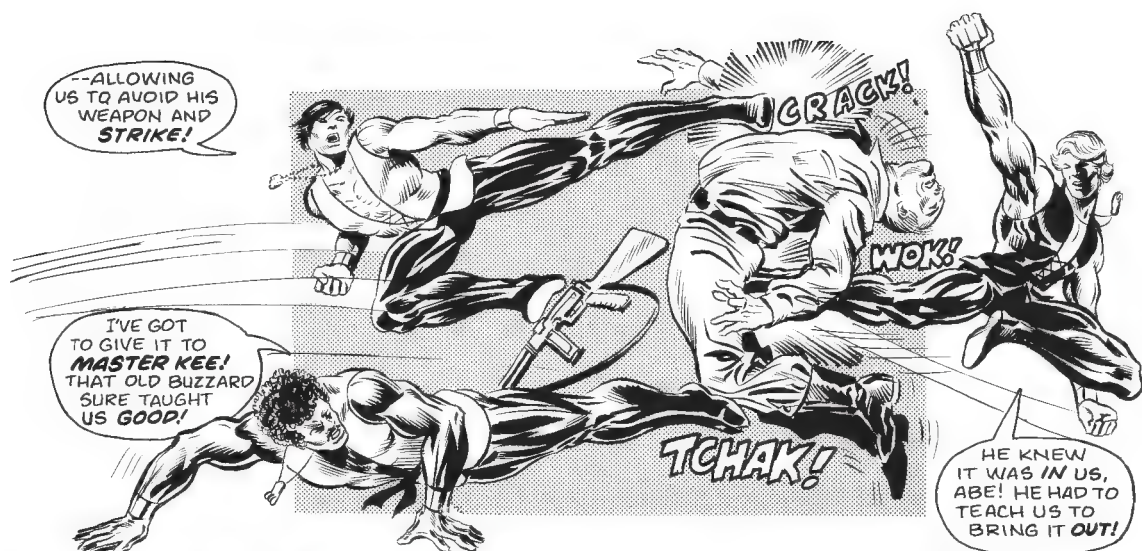


"...YOU KNOW, GET SHOT, COUNT TEN AND GET UP AGAIN. I GOT A FEELING THIS AIN'T THE SAME GAME!"



"...AND THE MAN GUIDING THE WEAPON IS TORN BY HATRED!"



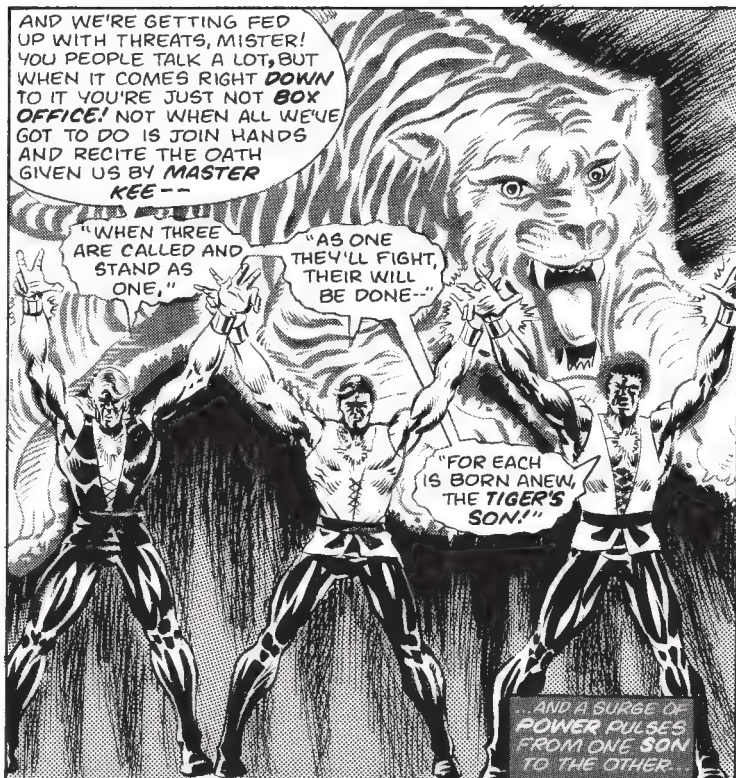






IT STOPS **NOW, MR. BROWN!** THE MASTERS GAVE THE WORM BEFORE YOU A FINAL CHANCE TO EFFECT YOUR **DESTRUCTION...** HE **FAILED!** WE CAN NO LONGER TOLERATE YOUR EXISTENCE! AS A **GIANT** CRUSHES A BOTHER-SOME **MOSQUITO**, SO NOW MUST YOU BE **CRUSHED!** **PREPARE YOURSELVES!**

THESE **MOSQUITOES** STILL HAVE A **STING** TO THEM! AND MORE THAN ONCE THIS NIGHT HAVE WE FACED PRE-MATURE THREATS OF **ANNIHILATION**, ONLY TO TURN THOSE WORDS BACK ON **HE** WHO SPOKE THEM!



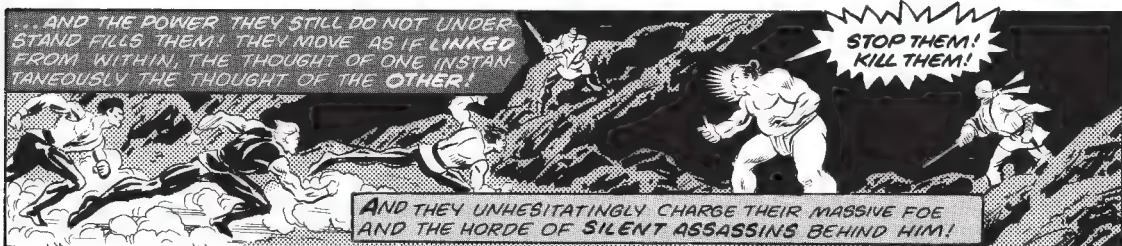
AND WE'RE GETTING FED UP WITH THREATS, MISTER! YOU PEOPLE TALK A LOT, BUT WHEN IT COMES RIGHT **DOWN** TO IT YOU'RE JUST NOT **BOX OFFICE!** NOT WHEN ALL WE'VE GOT TO DO IS JOIN HANDS AND RECITE THE OATH GIVEN US BY **MASTER KEE --**

"WHEN THREE ARE CALLED AND STAND AS ONE,"

"AS ONE THEY'LL FIGHT, THEIR WILL BE DONE--"

"FOR EACH IS BORN ANEW, THE **TIGER'S SON!**"

...AND A SURGE OF **POWER PULSES** FROM ONE SON TO THE OTHER...



...AND THE POWER THEY STILL DO NOT UNDERSTAND FILLS THEM! THEY MOVE AS IF LINKED FROM WITHIN, THE THOUGHT OF ONE INSTANTANEOUSLY THE THOUGHT OF THE OTHER!

**STOP THEM! KILL THEM!**

AND THEY UNHESITATINGLY CHARGE THEIR MASSIVE FOE AND THE HORDE OF SILENT ASSASSINS BEHIND HIM!



QUIET, EVIL PAWN OF EVIL MASTERS!

MANY MEN HAVE DIED BECAUSE OF THE STAIN YOUR MASTERS HAVE SPREAD ON THE EARTH!

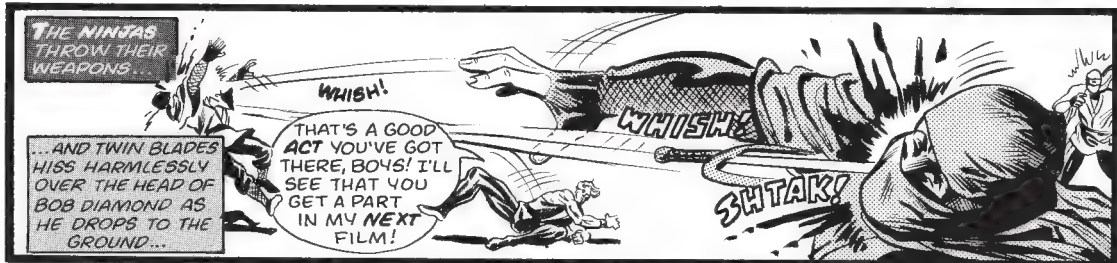


AND A MAN I **LOVED**, A MAN WHO RAISED ME, TAUGHT ME AS HIS **OWN SON**, IS **DEAD!**

AND IT WAS THE **SILENT ONES**, YOUR MASTERS, WHO **KILLED HIM**

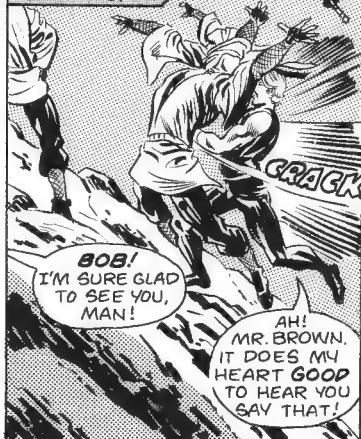
HIS MIND WHIRLS AS THE ANGER AND **RAGE** HE KEPT SO LONG IN CHECK WELL UP WITHIN HIM, AND HE **BATTERS** AT THE FACE OF THE MAN-MOUNTAIN, UNMINDFUL OF THE HUGE ARMS THAT ENFOLD HIM AND BEGIN **SQUEEZING** WITH A SLOW, **INEXORABLE PRESSURE**.







AND ENDS AS THE CHAIN OF WEAPON-WIELDING ASSASSINS IS BROKEN FROM BEHIND BY THE ARRIVAL OF...



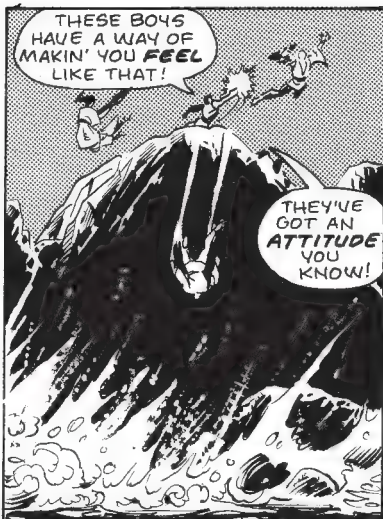
BOB!  
I'M SURE GLAD  
TO SEE YOU,  
MAN!

AH!  
MR. BROWN,  
IT DOES MY  
HEART GOOD  
TO HEAR YOU  
SAY THAT!

CRACK!!



YEAH, WELL,  
FOR A SECOND  
THERE I DIDN'T  
THINK I'D BE  
SAVIN' MUCH  
OF ANYTHING  
EVER AGAIN!



THESE BOYS  
HAVE A WAY OF  
MAKIN' YOU **FEEL**  
LIKE THAT!

THEY'VE  
GOT AN  
**ATTITUDE**  
YOU  
KNOW!



I KNOW WHAT  
YOU MEAN, ABE! THEY  
JUST DON'T UNDER-  
STAND HOW TO  
BE NICE!

CHOK!

NOW  
TAKE THIS ONE  
BEHIND ME--

IF HE HAD ANY  
MANNERS AT ALL  
HE'D **INTRODUCE**  
HIMSELF--



BUT HE HAD A BAD  
UPBRINGING SO I  
HAVE NO QUALMS  
AT ALL ABOUT  
DOING THIS!

I AGREE  
WHOLEHEARTEDLY,  
MR. DIAMOND!

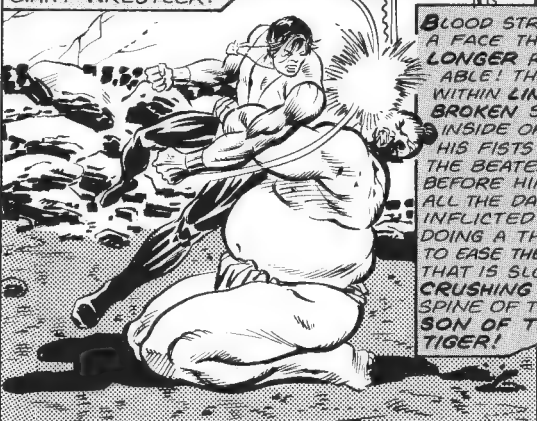


AND I THINK  
IT'S ABOUT TIME  
WE **ENDED**  
THIS THING!

FINE  
WITH ME  
MR. BROWN!

LIN,  
ARE YOU  
OKAY?

LIN SUN DOES NOT ANSWER! THE SUMO HAS FORCED ALMOST ALL THE AIR FROM HIS BODY AND WHAT REMAINS HE MUST USE TO HAMMER AWAY AT THE NEAR-UNCONSCIOUS FORM OF THE GIANT WRESTLER!



BLOOD STREAMS DOWN A FACE THAT IS NO LONGER RECOGNIZABLE! THE ANGER WITHIN LIN SUN HAS BROKEN SOMETHING INSIDE OF HIM, AND HIS FISTS FLAIL AT THE BEATEN PULP BEFORE HIM! YET ALL THE DAMAGE INFLICTED IS NOT DOING A THING TO EASE THE GRIP THAT IS SLOWLY CRUSHING THE SPINE OF THE SON OF THE TIGER!

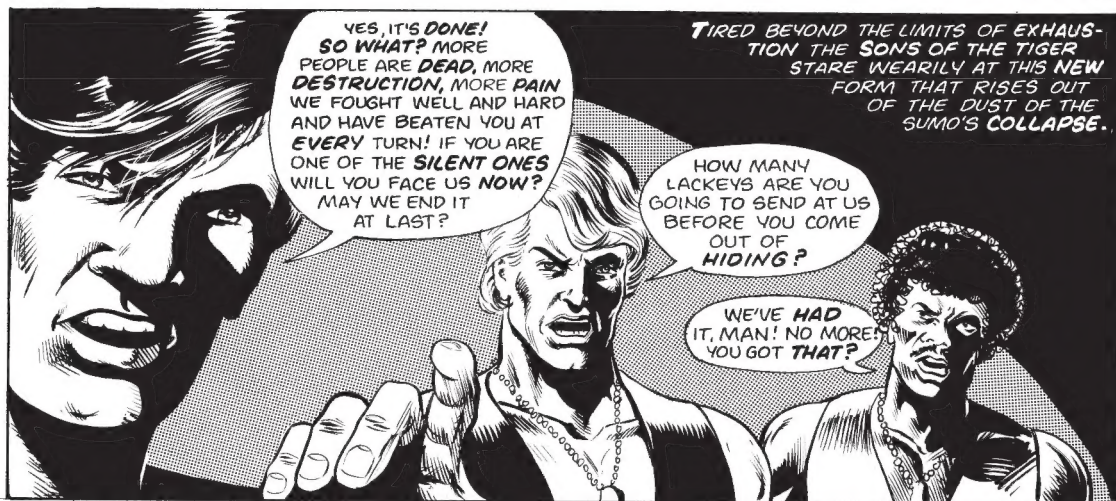
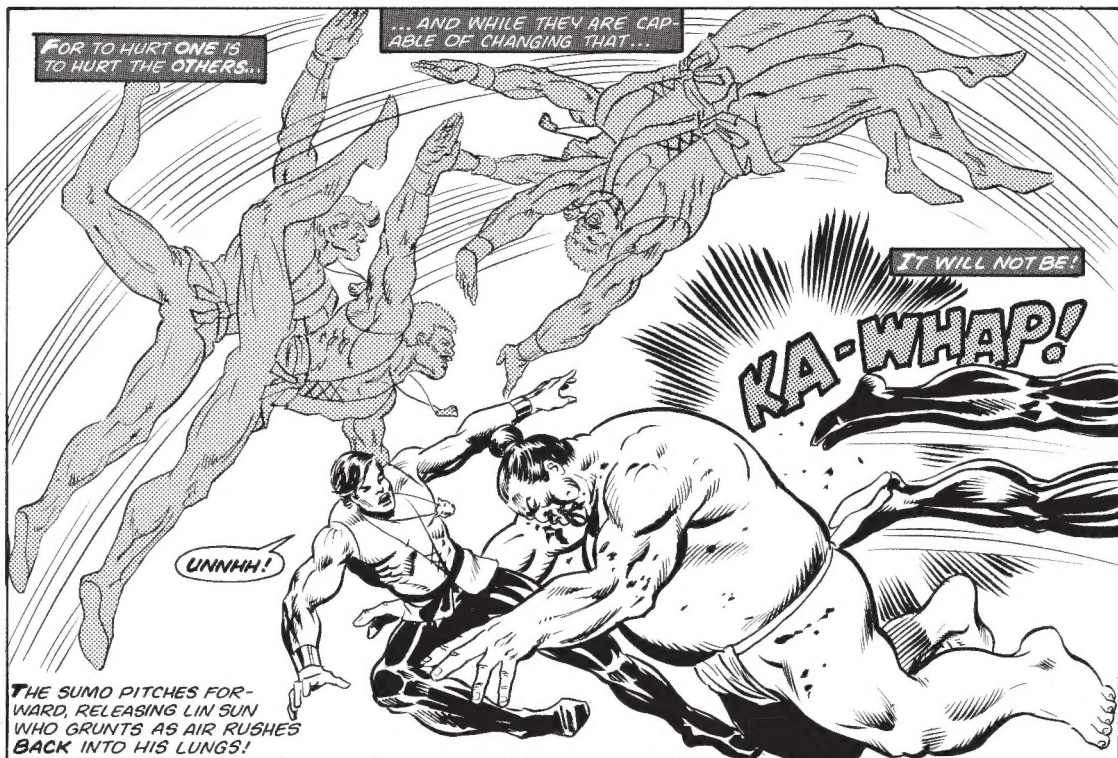


HOLD ON  
LIN!

WE'RE  
COMIN'!

AND EVEN WERE THEY NOT BOUND BY THE OATH, STILL WOULD THEY FEEL THE PAIN THAT IS SCREAMING WITHIN THEIR BROTHERS' MIND!







ALAS, NEITHER AM I ONE OF THE **MASTERS**, NOR IS IT YET **OVER!** THAT WOULD BE TOO EASY, WOULD IT NOT? FOR ALL LIFE IS A GREAT **BOOK** AND IF ONE WOULD FIND **ANSWERS** TO THE **QUESTIONS** POSED WITHIN, ONE MUST SEARCH EVER DEEPER WITHIN THE **MYSTERY!**



THE HOOD SLIPS FROM HER FACE AS SHE SPEAKS...

AND THE **MYSTERY** IS A **CHALLENGE** THAT MANY MEN HAVE DIED FOR! YET THE **MASTERS**, OUT OF **RESPECT** FOR THE WAY YOU HAVE FOUGHT, OUT OF **ACKNOWLEDGEMENT** THAT YOU ARE INDEED THE PUPILS OF **MASTER KEE--**



--HAVE SEEN FIT TO SHOW YOU **ONE PAGE** OF THAT **BOOK**, THAT YOU MAY FIND WHAT YOU **SEEK!**

AND I AM TO SHOW IT TO YOU! I KNOW **NOT** WHAT IT IS, I KNOW ONLY--



--THAT TO SEEK THE **SILENT ONES** IS TO SEEK

--**DEATH!**

AND THE NIGHT EXPLODES IN A CACAPHONY OF DESTRUCTION, THE **STARS** THEMSELVES CRASHING TO EARTH LIKE THE DEBRIS STREWN ABOUT LIKE THE HAVOC OF A **GOD-CHILD'S RAGE!**

**BAWHOOOM!**

GOOD GOD!

THE BRIDGE IS COMIN' DOWN!

AND THE **SONS OF THE TIGER**, MERE **SPECKS** IN THE EYE OF A **STORM**, CROUCH **HELPLESSLY** BENEATH THE MASS OF **CONCRETE** AND **STEEL** THAT RUSHES **SCREAMINGLY** UPON THEIR **HEADS!**

**NEXT: SLAUGHTER** IN **CENTRAL PARK!**





# NEXT ISSUE

## CONTEST OF TRUTH!

by Doug Moench & Mike Vosburg



*In just 30 days be witness to:*

A contest of truth, as SHANG-CHI becomes enmeshed in a grim morality play on a desolate seascape!

\*\*\*

A slaughter in Central Park, as Lin Sun fights alone—without the SONS OF THE TIGER!

\*\*\*

Another Frank McLaughlin how-to article on the MARTIAL ARTS!

\*\*\*

And more features on KUNG FU in the media!

All in issue #9 of—

THE DEADLY HANDS OF  
KUNG FU

75¢ — On sale  
January 7th.

## SLAUGHTER IN CENTRAL PARK!

by Bill Mantlo  
& George Perez







*Shadowcat*

